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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

CATHARINE DE BORA,

WIFE OF LUTHER.

CATHARINE DE BORA;

OR,

Social and Domestic

SCENES IN THE

HOME OF LUTHER.

BY

JOHN G. MORRIS,

TRANSLATOR OF "THE BLIND GIRL OF WITTENBERG," AND PASTOR OF THE FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH OF BALTIMORE.

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PREFACE.

THERE are many interesting and characteristic incidents in the domestic life of Luther which are not found in biographies of the great Reformer. The character of his wife has not been portrayed in full, and who does not wish to become better acquainted with a woman who mingled many a drop of balsam in those numerous cups of sorrow which her celebrated husband was compelled to drink?

This little book is the result of extensive research, and exhibits facts attested by the most reliable authorities, many of which will be new to those of my readers who have not investigated this particular subject.

J. G. M.

BALTIMORE, June, 1856.

LUTHER AT HOME.

CHAPTER I.

Clerical Celibacy — Luther — Bernhardi's Marriage—Treatment of Catharine de Bora — the Convent — Wealthy Nuns — Convent Life — the Escape — Treatment of the Nuns — Florentine de Oberweimer — Leonard Koppe — Luther's Defence.

THE celibacy of the clergy was one of the strongest pillars on which the proud edifice of Romish power rested. It was a stupendous partition-wall which separated the clergy from all other interests, and thus consolidated the wide-spread authority of the Pope. It cut off the secular clergy, as well as the monks, from all domestic ties. They forgot father, mother, and friends. Political obligations to their sovereign and country were disregarded, but the cord which bound them to the interests of Rome was only the more tightly drawn.

Superior purity was the presumed ground of the system, but a total surrender of all rights, and complete submission to the will of the Pope, were its legitimate results. He was regarded as the only parent of the clergy — the only sovereign to whom they owed allegiance — the only protector in whom they were to confide, and, as dutiful sons, obedient subjects, and grateful beneficiaries, they were obliged to exert themselves to the utmost to maintain his authority and extend his dominion. Clerical celibacy was regarded not only as a duty, but as the highest attainment in moral perfection. The system was introduced with caution and maintained with sleepless vigilance and zeal. There were some who saw its errors and disadvantages, and desired its abolition, but their remonstrances were unheeded and their clamors silenced.

That, however, which was considered impossible by the whole Christian world, was accomplished by a single man, who himself had been a monk, and whose first duty as such was a vow of celibacy! That man was MARTIN LUTHER, Augustinian Monk, Doctor of Theology at the University of Wittenberg, who, by his

heroic conduct in relation to this subject, has only added to the other inappreciable services he has rendered the Church. It was he who was bold enough to abandon the monastic order, and, in spite of the principles of the Church as they prevailed in that age, *to enter the married state.* This adventurous step led to the deliverance of a large portion of the clergy from the chain of Papal power. From having been the slavish satellites of a foreign master in Italy, they became patriotic subjects and useful men at home.

Several years before, two friends of Luther, who were his noble assistants in the work of the Reformation, Melanchthon and Carlstadt, had written treatises against clerical celibacy. Their books on this subject were equally as unexpected, and created as much excitement among the clergy, as Luther's Theses against Indulgences had done six years before.

Luther was not the first priest of those days who practically rejected celibacy. As early as 1521, one of his friends and fellow-laborers, Bernhardi, superintendent of the churches at Kemberg, had the boldness to marry. He was the first ecclesiastic in Saxony who took this

step, and his wedding-day was long regarded as the *Pastors' Emancipation Day;* but Caspar Aquila, a priest residing near Augsburg, was married as early as 1516, Jacob Knabe in 1518, and Nicolas Brunner in 1519.

Luther was free from all participation in Bernhardi's marriage, for at that time he was a prisoner in Wartburg Castle, and the first intelligence came so unexpectedly, that whilst he admired the courage of his friend, he was very apprehensive it would occasion him and his cause many severe trials. Not long after, Bernhardi's metropolitan, the Cardinal Archbishop Albert, of Mainz and Magdeburg, demanded of the Elector of Saxony, Frederick the Wise, to send Bernhardi to Halle, to answer for his presumptuous act. Frederick did not yield to the demand of the Archbishop, and the latter professed to be satisfied with an anonymous defence of Bernhardi.

Luther himself sent a petition to Albert in behalf of the clergy who had already married and of those who intended to marry. Subsequently, however, Bernhardi suffered severely. When, in 1547, more than twenty years after his nuptials, the Emperor Charles V. captured

Wittenberg, his savage Spaniards seized Bernhardi, and bound him fast to a table. His wife rescued him from their murderous hands; but, soon after, others laid hold of him, and after cruelly beating him, tied him to a horse and dragged him to the camp at Torgau. A German officer, after much trouble, had him liberated, and he finally, after unexampled suffering, reached his family at Kemberg. A considerable number of priests followed the example of Bernhardi. They were not deterred by the ban of the bishops, nor by the fear of deposition and imprisonment. But all this would not have created such immense excitement if Luther himself, to whom all eyes were directed, had not resolved, by his own example, to strike a deadly blow at priestly celibacy.

Catharine de Bora, a nun of the celebrated Bernhardin or Cistercian convent at Nimtschen, in Saxony, was the person whom Luther chose as his wife. She was born on the 29th of January, 1499. There is no authentic record of the place of her birth, and the history of her childhood is wrapped in obscurity. It is only as the nun Catharine that we first became acquainted with her. Her Romish calumniators

(and no innocent woman was ever more bitterly and cruelly defamed,) declare that her parents compelled her to become a nun against her will, because they were poor and could not support her, and particularly because her conduct was so objectionable that her seclusion was necessary. As regards the first, it is true; she was not wealthy when she became the wife of Luther; but, if she had been compelled to enter the nunnery, it is likely that Luther would have mentioned it as an additional justification of her flight. Her objectionable morality is based by her enemies on the fact of her escape, and hence the accusation has no ground whatever. There is not a particle of proof to establish the calumnious charge.

This Convent was designated by the name of *The Throne of God.* It was founded in 1250 by Henry the Illustrious. No trace of it remains at the present day. In 1810–12 its ruins were removed to make room for the erection of an edifice connected with a school for boys established at that place.

Most of the inmates of this Convent were of noble birth, for at that day, as well as at present, it was the policy and interest of the

Romish clergy to induce as many ladies of high rank as possible to take the veil, thereby rendering the profession respectable, and securing large sums as entrance fees if they were wealthy, and all their patrimony after their decease.

It may seem strange that Catharine de Bora, who, according to her own confession, was devout, industrious in the discharge of conventual duties, and diligent in prayer, should have determined with eight other "sisters" to escape from their prison. But when it is considered that the convent was situated within the territory of the Elector Frederick the Wise, who was Luther's friend and patron — that Luther himself visited a neighboring monastery at Grimma as Inspector — that in 1519, after the dispute with Eck at Leipzig, he spent a few days in the town of Nimtschen — that the principles of the Reformation had already made some progress in that vicinity, and that several monasteries not far distant had been abandoned — the circumstance is easily explained. It is scarcely credible that amid the excitement of the times, no word of Luther's doctrine should have entered the convent halls, and that the stirring events occurring around them should

have been entirely concealed from the unobtrusive occupants. Could not some of those courageous friends of Luther, who afterwards, at his suggestion, effected the escape of the nuns, have previously introduced some of Luther's tracts into the convent? He had at that time already written several small books against the monastic life, and it is likely that some of these had been clandestinely introduced, the perusal of which convinced these "sisters" that their profession was not sanctioned by the Scriptures, and that it was dangerous to their morals. They became so thoroughly assured of the enormous error they had committed in thus secluding themselves from the world, and were so heartily weary of the unnatural restraint imposed upon them, that they earnestly besought their relatives to liberate them for their souls' sake! But these appeals were unheard, and now probably the unhappy petitioners turned immediately to Luther. He not only favored their resolution to escape, but selected his courageous friend, Bernhard Koppe, a citizen of Torgau, to execute the project. Two other citizens of the same place accompanied him on the adventure.

George Spalatin, Court Chaplain and Secretary of the Elector, reports that they fled from the convent on the night before Easter, April 4, 1523. There were nine of them in all.

The accounts of the manner in which their rescue was effected, differ. Some historians report that prudence required them to preserve the strictest secrecy as long as they were traversing the territory of Duke George, who was violently opposed to the Reformation, and hence they were conveyed away in a covered wagon, and a few affirm, on the authority of reliable documents, that they were concealed in casks. The historians, however, agree that Koppe performed his part in the enterprise with consummate courage and skill. It is very likely that the nuns were aware of Koppe's design, and held themselves in readiness at the appointed time. Tradition tells us that they escaped through the window of Catharine's cell. To this day, they show at Nimtschen a slipper which they say Catharine lost in the hurry of the flight.

They arrived at Wittenberg on the 7th of April, under circumstances calculated to excite the sympathy of every feeling heart. As they

deserted the convent against the will of their relatives, and most of them probably being orphans, they did not know where to find shelter or support. But Luther, who had advised their flight, and aided in effecting it, kindly received them, and spared no pains to render their condition comfortable. In a few but expressive words to Spalatin, he announced their arrival and depicted their destitution. He thus writes on the 10th of April: "These eloped nuns have come to me; they are in destitute circumstances, but as very respectable citizens of Torgau have brought them, there can be no suspicion entertained as to their moral character. I sincerely pity their forlorn state, and particularly that of the great number still confined in convents, who are going to ruin in that condition of constrained and unnatural celibacy. * * * How tyrannical and cruel," continues Luther, "many parents and relatives of these oppressed women in Germany are! But ye popes and bishops! who can censure you with sufficient severity? who can sufficiently abominate your wickedness and blindness for upholding these accursed institutions? But this is not the place to speak at large on this subject. You ask, dear Spalatin,

what I intend to do with these nuns? I shall report these facts to their relatives, so that they may provide for them. If they should refuse, I shall look to some other persons, for several have promised aid. Their names are Margaretta Staupitz, Elizabeth de Carnitz, Eva Grossin, Eva Schönfield and her Sister Margaret, Lunette de Golis, Margaret de Zeschau and her sister Catharine, and Catharine de Bora. They are, indeed, objects worthy of compassion, and Christ will be served by conferring favors on them."

As he could not afford to support them himself, he begged his friend to solicit donations at court, that these fugitives might be supported for several weeks. By that time he hoped to send them to their friends or patrons. As Spalatin did not reply immediately, Luther wrote again, and begged not to be forgotten. He added, "Yea, I even exhort the Prince to send a contribution. I will keep it a profound secret, and tell no one that he gave anything to these apostate nuns who have been rescued from their prison."

There is no doubt that the Elector, who esteemed Luther highly, sent him the desired

relief. The pacific Prince only wished the fact of his contribution to be kept secret, that he might not give the Romish clergy, and particularly Duke George of Saxony, occasion for new complaint.

Luther's intercessions in behalf of the nuns with their relatives seem to have been fruitless, but the people of Wittenberg were liberal beyond his expectations in their donations for their support. They were kindly received into various families, and hospitably entertained. In this way Philip Reichenbach, a magistrate of the city, became the protector or foster-father of Catharine de Bora, who, by her virtuous and dignified behavior, rendered herself worthy of his paternal benevolence. This is, of itself, a sufficient refutation of the slanders of Romish writers, who charge her with leading a dissolute life until her marriage with Luther; for no city official, such as Reichenbach, would have hazarded his own character by harboring a licentious woman. Neither would Dr. Glacius and other eminent divines have sought her hand in marriage, as they perseveringly did, nor would she have enjoyed the friendship and confidence of Amsdorff and other professors of

the University if she had not sustained a character above suspicion. The epitaph on her tomb-stone at Torgau commemmorates her virtues in most exalted terms of eulogy, from the time of her escape to her death.

The flight of the nuns was itself an unusual event, but it became immensely important, for extraordinary consequences resulted from it. Pains were taken to conceal the bold step they had assumed, especially from all other convents. But these exertions were useless; nuns at other places heard what their more adventurous sisters at Nimtschen had dared to do, and they also undertook to fly from their narrow, unwholesome cells to breathe the pure air of heaven. The abbess and four other nuns of the Benedictine convent at Zeitz; six at Sormitz; eight at Pentwitz, and sixteen at Wiedenstadt, escaped in a short time. Luther's enemies now assailed him with ferocious malignity. They regarded him as the author of all this enormous mischief, and tried to show that his work was productive of nothing but unmitigated evil, because it occasioned such abominable results as the flight of poor nuns from their convent prisons. Luther replied to

them very briefly; he represented the dark side of the picture of conventual life, and narrated some striking facts in illustration. He published the life of a nun, *Florentine de Oberweimer*, who had escaped from a convent at Eisleben. "I was but six years old," she says, "when I was sent to the convent by my parents. When I was eleven, without knowing or being asked whether I could or would observe the rules, I was compelled to take the vow. When I was fourteen, and I began to find out that this mode of life was against my nature, and hence complained to the abbess, she told me that I must be contented and should continue to be a nun no matter what I thought or felt. I then wrote to the learned Dr. Luther and begged his advice: but my letter was intercepted by my superiors, who immediately put me in prison, where I remained four weeks and suffered much. The abbess then put me under the bans. (Florentine then minutely describes the severe treatment she received before the ban was dissolved.) After that, I wrote to my relative, Caspar de Watzdorf, who loved the gospel truth, and complained of my treatment. This also became known to the abbess, and I

cannot tell to strangers how shamefully I was abused by her and others. *I was so violently beaten by her and four other persons that they became completely exhausted.* She put me in prison again and fastened my feet with iron chains," &c., &c.

In the dedication of this little book to the Duke of Mansfeld, in whose dominions the convent was located, Luther wrote on the 2nd of March, 1524, "What are you about, ye princes and lords, that ye drive the people to God whether they will or not? It is not your office nor in your power. To outward obedience you may compel them, but God will regard no vow that is not cheerfully and voluntarily kept. Hence, my dear, gracious sirs, I have published this little narrative that all the world may know *what conventual life is, and the devil's folly thus be made known.* There are princes and lords who are very indignant about this affair, and it is no wonder. If they knew what I know, they would perhaps honor me more for it, and contribute much more towards spreading it abroad than I am doing."

But Luther was not the only one who was charged with being accessory to the flight of

these nuns. Leonard Koppe, as the chief instrument in effecting their escape, was, perhaps, exposed to greater dangers and persecutions than Luther, who was powerfully protected by his prince. For although Koppe had formerly been a councillor and a government auditor, yet he had reason to fear the worst treatment from the clergy if his participation in the act should become generally known. Hence he sought to conceal it: but Luther, who was a stranger to the fear of man, and who, in all things, went to work openly and boldly, was of a different opinion. Fully convinced that Koppe had performed a meritorious act, of which he should not be ashamed, but rather boast, he mentioned his name in a letter to Spalatin a few days after the escape of the nuns; but he also deemed it prudent to write to Koppe and inspire him with courage. "Be assured," he writes, "that God has so ordained it, and that it is not your work or counsel; never mind the clamor of those who denounce it as a most wicked undertaking, and who do not believe it was so ordered of God. Shame! shame! they will say; the fool, Leonard Koppe, has suffered himself to be led by that cursed

heretical monk, and has aided nine nuns to fly from the convent at once and to violate their vows. To this you will reply: '*This is indeed a strange way of keeping the thing secret.* You are betraying me, and the whole convent of Nimtschen will be up against me, or they will now hear that I have been the robber.' But my reasons for not keeping it secret are good: 1. That it may be known that I did not advise it to be concealed; for what we do, we do in and for God, and do not shun the light of day. Would to heaven I could in this or some other way rescue all troubled consciences and empty all convents! I would not be afraid to confess my own agency in the business, nor that of all my assistants. Confidence in Jesus, whose gospel is destroying the kingdom of Antichrist, would sustain me, *even if it should cost me my life.* 2. I do it for the sake of the poor nuns, and of their relatives, so that no one may be able to say they were involuntarily abducted by wicked fellows, and thus be robbed of their reputation. 3. To warn the nobility and pious gentry who have children in convents to take them away themselves, so that no worse thing befal them. You

know that I *advised* and *sanctioned* the enterprise; that you *executed* it, and that the nuns *consented* and *earnestly desired* it, and I will here briefly give the reasons for it before God and the world. First, *The nuns themselves had before most humbly solicited the help of their relatives and friends in effecting their release; they gave them satisfactory reasons why such a life could no longer be endured, for it interfered with their souls' salvation, and they promised to be faithful and dutiful children when they should be released.* All this was positively denied to them, and they were forsaken by all their relations. Hence they had the right, yea, were compelled to relieve their burdened consciences, and save their souls by seeking help from other quarters, and those who were in a position to afford counsel and aid, were bound by Christian love to bestow them. *Secondly*, It is not right that young girls should be locked up in convents where there is no daily use made of the word of God, and where the gospel is seldom or never heard, and where, of course, these girls are exposed to the severest temptations. *Thirdly*, It is plain that a person may be compelled to do before the world what

is not cheerfully done; but before God and in his service no one has a right to use compulsion. *Fourthly*, Women were created for other purposes than to spend a lazy and useless life in a convent.

CHAPTER II.

Luther's Reflections — Example of the Apostles — Celibacy — Gregory VII. — Luther's Change of Mind — Luther's Marriage — Character of Catharine.

ALL these preliminary steps were not unpremeditated by Luther. Encouraged by the example of other clergymen who had married, he now began seriously to reflect on the *propriety of clerical matrimony.*

In these reflections he found no difficulty as regards the secular clergy, that is, those who officiated as pastors of churches, because he considered their office as divinely instituted, and he knew from history that their celibacy was forced by the popes under the most cruel oppression. For although Paul advised the

Christians of Corinth to remain unmarried during the season of persecution,* yet the first teachers of Christianity, and even Peter and most of the other apostles, were married men.† Besides, celibacy is no where regarded as a meritorious condition in the New Testament. Christ himself distinctly commends matrimonial affection and harmony, and Paul teaches that it is better to lead a married, than an unchaste life.‡ 1 Cor. 7; 2, 9, 28.

Notwithstanding all this, even during the first three centuries, a peculiar merit began to be attached to celibacy. Many bishops, who were, it is true, poorly enough supported, abstained from matrimony, or, if they were

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* 1 Cor. 7; 7, 8, 26, 28.

† 1 Tim. 3; 2, 12. Tit. 1; 6. 1 Cor. 9; 5, 6. Matt. 8; 14. Mark 1; 1. Luke 4; 38.

‡ The passage 1 Cor. 9; 5, 6, speaks of Christian *married women*, who accompanied the apostles on their travels. From this and other passages it is undeniable that most of the apostles, and that, too, during their apostleship, were married men. John probably lived unmarried; and Paul seems to say the same of himself. 1 Cor. 7; 7, 8, compare ch. 9; 5. 6. The idea that in Phil. 4; 3, he is speaking of *his own* wife, conflicts with the connection of the verse.

married, separated from their wives. A second marriage was particularly disapproved. But as yet there was no law on the subject, and the celibacy of the bishops was far from being general. Many of them were married men. It was only in the fourth century that it became a general custom for the bishops to lead single lives, and several councils held during this period, in this respect severely oppressed the secular clergy. At the council of Nice, held in the year 325, the first serious attempt was made to introduce celibacy, but the attempt failed through the influence of Bishop Paphnutius, of Upper Thebes. From this time, most of the bishops tried their utmost to prevent their secular clergy from marrying. Some Popes, since the end of the fourth century, such as Siricius, Innocent I., Gregory II., Nicolas I., and Leo IX. also made attempts to restrain the priests. The predictions of Paul in 1 Tim. 4; 1, 3, were soon fulfilled. Scarcely had Gregory VII. arrived at the papal dignity than he exerted all his influence to render the secular clergy independent of the state, and this he thought could be best accomplished through celibacy. The orders which he communicated

to the council held at Rome in 1074 in relation to this subject were very severe; the married clergy were to be separated from their wives or be deposed, and from that time forth no man was to be ordained to the clerical office who would not bind himself to remain unmarried all his life. The opposition to this severe regulation was strong. In Germany they even committed violence on the papal ambassador, and openly reproached the Pope as a heretic, who disregarded the plain instructions of the Scriptures and introduced regulations which militated against human nature and Divine Providence, and which would lead to the most scandalous improprieties. When Archbishop Siegfried of Mainz held a council at Erfurt, and communicated the commands of the Pope to the secular clergy, the excitement was so great that he was in danger of his life. The Archbishop of Passau did not fare better. At the council of Worms, in 1076, Germans and French violently opposed the Pope, and proclaimed him as a usurper of the papal sovereignty. At a meeting in Pavia, the Italian bishops even *put this Pope under the ban.*

Notwithstanding all this oppposition, Gregory

could not be turned from his purpose. He executed his orders with all possible severity, and even demanded of the princes to forbid those priests who would not obey him from administering the sacraments or reading mass. Thus his unnatural law triumphed in 1080, though not universally, for Urban II. felt himself compelled in 1089 and 1095 to re-enact it, and it was reserved for Innocent III. in 1215 more firmly to establish celibacy as a disciplinary law, although, long before this, marriage had been declared to be a *sacrament*. In his address in 1520 to his Imperial Majesty and German nobility, Luther strenuously advocated the marriage of the *secular* clergy.

He entertained different views, however, with regard to the *monastic* order, and he made their celibacy a subject of investigation at Wartburg castle. Although, thought he, their office is not of divine appointment, yet they had chosen it, and had consecrated themselves to God; in most instances they had voluntarily assumed the vow, and hence were bound to keep it. Melanchthon, who had married a short time before, and Carlstadt, who followed his example a short time after, to Luther's

great joy, had both advocated the marriage of the monastic clergy in their writings, although not altogether with his approbation.* "Our Wittenbergers even wish the monks to have wives!" thus he wrote to Spalatin, August 6th, 1521, "*but they shall force no wife on me!* I wish Carlstadt's book had more light and distinctness, for it contains much talent and learning."†

But Luther's penetrating mind soon discovered the truth. He communicated his new-formed opinion to his father, and openly came out in favor of the marriage of the monks. Although he now sturdily maintained this side

* Melanchthon married (Nov. 25, 1520,) Anna Krappe, daughter of the burgomaster of Wittenberg; Carlstadt, (Dec. 26, 1521,) Anna von Michael. Soon after, he gave his reasons for this step in a letter to the Elector, in which he says, "I have learned from the Scriptures that there is no condition of life more pleasing to God, more blessed and more consistent with Christian liberty than the married state, if we live in it agreeably to God's design." Luther highly approved of the measure.

† He thus expressed himself in one of his tracts: "I hope I have come so far *that by the grace of God I may remain as I am*, although I have not yet got over the difficulty."

of the question, yet he did not at this time feel himself inclined to matrimony. This was in the autumn of 1522.

Two years after this (1524), when he heard of a report in circulation that he was to be married, he thus wrote to Spalatin: "From the opinion which I have hitherto had, and now have, it is probable I shall never marry; not that I do not feel myself to be flesh and blood, for I am neither wood nor stone, but I feel no inclination in that way." Still, he highly honored the married relation as an institution of God. Long after this he wrote thus to his friend Stiefel: "I did not marry as though I expected to live long, but to establish my doctrine by my example, and to leave behind me a consolation for weak consciences." "I married also for the purpose of opposing the doctrine of Satan, and putting to shame the scandalous immorality practised in the papacy, and if I had no wife I would now marry even in my old age, just to honor the divine institution and to pour contempt on the ungodly lives of so many popish priests."

Luther's mind gradually underwent a change. He now secretly resolved to marry Catharine,

who had already, as we shall see below, expressed a tender feeling towards him. An intimation of his purpose we have in a letter to his relative, Dr. John Ruhl, of May 4, 1525: "If I can manage to spite the devil, I will marry Catharine before I die if I hear that my enemies continue their reproaches." From this it is evident that he would not have married, at least at this time, if the clamor of his enemies, the fear and weakness of his friends, and various other circumstances, had not determined him to take the step. The generous and public declaration of John the Constant* in favor of the Reformation, as well as his own opposition to the celibacy of the clergy, and the desire of gratifying the long-expressed wish of his father, hastened the consummation of his design. "Thus," says he, "I could no longer deny this last act of obedience to my dear father, who earnestly entreated me to marry." Besides this, he wished to set an example to others around him, for many whom he advised to marry had reproached him for writing against

* His brother and predecessor, Frederick the Wise, had died May 5, 1525.

monastic celibacy and yet not practising his own doctrine.

In the meantime, he wrote frequently to his friends on this subject, and what gratified him much in the prospect of his marriage was the chagrin it would occasion the Romish party, and subsequent experience proved that he was not disappointed in his hopes.

Anxious as he was to consummate the event, yet his choice of Catharine was not precipitate. It was only after he was assured of the superlative excellence of her character that he offered her his hand. She conducted herself in her lowly circumstances with such a reserved and womanly dignity that he thought her to be somewhat prudish and proud, and it was only after a more intimate acquaintance that he perceived her numerous good qualities. "If I had felt a disposition to marry thirteen years ago," says he, "I would have preferred Eva Schönfield, who is now the wife of Dr. Basilius. I did not love my Catharine at that time, for I suspected her of being proud. But it has pleased God otherwise, and, blessed be His name, all things have turned out well, for I have a pious, faithful wife, as Solomon says,

Prov. 31; 11, my heart doth safely trust in her, and she contributes so much to my content and manages my affairs so prudently, *that I have no need of spoil*, that is, I have no temptation to envy the wealth of others or to prey upon my neighbors."

Nor was she, on her part, in a hurry about giving her consent, but she deliberated long. Though she was poor, yet she followed the inclination of her heart.

Before he thought of marrying her himself he recommended her to Jerome S. Baumgartner, a Nurnberg Patrician, and a student of theology, who had a very tender regard for Catharine, and to whom she was not altogether indifferent. Luther wrote to him (Oct. 12, 1524,): "If you have made up your mind to marry Catharine, you had better be in a hurry before another takes her who is near at hand. She has not ceased to love you, and I should be much gratified to see you marry her." But his recommendation was of no avail, probably because Baumgartner, after his return home, was captivated by some other lady. The other suitor to whom Luther alludes was Dr. Caspar Glacius, vicar of the Archdeaconate of the Castle Church

at Wittenberg. Luther favored his pretensions to her hand, and this led her to complain to Amsdorff, Luther's friend. She requested him to induce Luther to cease his importunity in behalf of Glacius, for whom she had no inclination whatever. She, however, honestly acknowledged to Amsdorff she would not refuse an offer either from himself or Luther. She was not mistaken in her estimate of Glacius, for he was an ill-tempered man, who never was at peace with his congregation, and was dismissed from his office in 1537.

The marriage of a nun was, until that time, unheard of, and hence we need not wonder that Luther's enemies took every opportunity to calumniate him as well as his intended wife. As Erasmus says, "It was at that time an almost universal sentiment that the Antichrist would be the son of a monk and a nun;" and he remarks in relation to this old saying, "If this were true, the world has had thousands of Antichrists!" His enemies knew too well how to make the most of this popular belief, but they went still further, and charged him with all the misfortunes that befel the country; the demolition of the convents in the Peasants'

War, and other similar calamities, for they said that he inflamed the hatred of the peasants against monastic life and the possessions of the clergy, "And all this he did," they affirmed, "that he might marry."

But many of his friends also disapproved of such an alliance. "Our wise men are fiercely excited on the subject," wrote Luther, after his marriage, to Stiefel. "They must confess it is the work of God, but my professional character, as well as that of the lady, blinds them and makes them think and speak unkindly. But the Lord lives, who is greater in us than he who is in the world, and there are more on my side than on theirs."

It was perfectly in character with Luther not to delay the execution of a purpose he had once formed. He was particularly opposed to long-standing matrimonial engagements, and hence says, "I advise a speedy marriage after a positive engagement; it is dangerous to postpone the consummation, for Satan is ready to oppose many obstacles, by means of slanderers, and sometimes the friends of both parties interfere. Hence do not postpone the affair. If I had not married secretly, and with the know-

ledge of but few friends, my marriage would have been prevented, for my best friends exclaimed, 'Do not take this one, but another.'" Hence we are not surprised to learn that his final engagement to Catharine and his marriage occurred on the same day.

His friends did not maintain that he should not marry at all, but they did not esteem it wise that one who had been a monk should marry a lady who had been a nun. They feared that the step would retard the Reformation among the common people, who did not look with indifference on the violation of the vow of chastity.* But Luther thought otherwise, and believed that by marrying a nun he would inflict a terrible blow on the whole system of monasticism.

The most minute attention was at that time paid to Luther's doctrine and conduct, and the most unimportant circumstances in his eventful life were reported with the greatest care. We should hence suppose that the precise date of

* Dr. Jerome Scurf, Professor of Theology at Wittenberg, among others, said, "If this monk should marry, the whole world, yea, the devil himself would laugh, and he would thereby spoil all his previous works."

his marriage would also be noted, and yet the reports are very different. Melanchthon's statement is the most reliable, for he lived at that time in Wittenberg; he had daily intercourse with Luther, and hence may be supposed to be intimately acquainted with his domestic circumstances. In a letter to Camerarius (July 21, 1525,) he gives the true date of Luther's marriage: "As it may happen," he writes, "that no one will give you a correct account of Luther's marriage, I have thought it proper to inform you of the facts. On the 13th of June, 1525, he, quite unexpectedly, married Catharine De Bora." There is no good reason to doubt Melanchthon's report of the date, which is established by many other witnesses, and hence it is unnecessary to refute those who give other dates.

Agreeably to these accounts, compared with others, it appears that Luther on the Tuesday after Trinity, June 13, 1525, in order to avoid all excitement, took with him John Bugenhagen (Pomeranius) pastor of the City Church, Dr. John Apel, Professor of Canonical Law, and Louis Cranach, Court Painter, Councillor, and Chamberlain, without the knowledge of his other

friends, and proceeded to the house of the town-clerk, Reichenbach, with whom Catharine lived, and there, in the presence of these three friends, he asked her consent in marriage. Unexpected as this declaration was, yet she yielded to the solicitation of her former deliverer and benefactor. Soon after, the Provost, Dr. Justus Jonas, and the wife of Cranach, entered, and Luther was there married in the presence of these four witnesses, Bugenhagen performing the ceremony. Luther was forty-two years of age, and Catharine twenty-seven. He did not even ask the consent of the Elector; but, as we shall subsequently see, he sent him an humble request for some game to supply his wedding dinner-table.

Before the wedding, Luther offered the following prayer: "Heavenly Father, inasmuch as thou hast honored me with the office of the ministry, and wilt also that I should be honored as a husband and the head of a family, grant me grace to govern my household in a godly and Christian manner. Grant me wisdom and strength to direct and train all the members of my family in the right way. Give them willing hearts and pious dispositions to be obedient, and

to follow in all things the instructions of thy word. Amen."

The golden wedding-rings of Luther and his wife were probably not exchanged on this evening, but afterwards. The celebrated artist, Albert Dürer, of Nurnberg, made them at the order and expense of the Patrician and Councillor von Pirckenheim. They are minutely described by some writers, and exact representations of them are given in various curious works. One of these rings has exchanged hands many times by gift, sale, and inheritance. Numerous imitations of them have been made, and sold to collectors of such articles.

When, on the following day, the marriage of Luther became generally known, the town council of Wittenberg sent him various articles, such as are usually considered essential to wedding festivals of every age and country.

CHAPTER III.

Wedding-Dinner — Melanchthon — Slanders.

Thus had Luther, actuated by the purest motives, suddenly and silently, entered into this matrimonial alliance. Now it was no longer secret, and in compliance with a custom common in that day he determined to invite a number of his friends, in and out of Wittenberg, including his parents, to a wedding-dinner. This was to occur on the 27th of June, two weeks after his marriage. On that day also, he purposed to conduct his wife publicly to his own residence at the Augustinian monastery. To his absent friends he sent written invitations, seven of which are still extant. But he was particularly desirous of having his parents, who resided at Mansfeld, present on the occasion. He was anxious to show them that he had finally gratified their most ardent wishes in abandoning the monastic life and entering on matrimony. But he also wished to make them personally acquainted with Catharine, and to

receive from them their parental blessing. They, with three or four others of his friends, accepted the invitation. At this, as well at the other more private festival on the day after his marriage, the town council of Wittenberg expressed their highest respect for Luther by sending him some essential contributions to his dinner.

It may appear remarkable, at first sight, that Melanchthon, Luther's most intimate friend and inseparable companion, should not have been present at this nor at the previous solemnity, nor even consulted by Luther on the subject of his marriage. But he well knew the timidity and excessive sensitiveness of Melanchthon. He knew that his friend was so painfully concerned for his reputation and peace of mind, that though he could not disapprove of the act, yet he would reprove him for the manner and time, fearing the evil consequences that might result to the work of the Reformation. Hence Luther did not consult Melanchthon, and even avoided his company at this time. The whole circumstance occasioned much painful anxiety to Melanchthon, not because he did not sanction the act in itself, but because it would give

the numerous enemies of Luther fresh occasion for more bitter persecution and more virulent calumny.

Although Luther had acted with great deliberation in this affair, making it a subject of most fervent prayer, and hastening its consummation in order only to avoid excitement, yet occasionally he sometimes seemed deeply depressed on that very account, because in the opinion of many, the whole transaction was calculated to injure his reputation. But through the fraternal consolations of Melanchthon, he was soon restored to his usual vivacity. He felt himself happy in the possession of Catharine; for his marriage, instead of interfering with his numerous professional engagements, only inspired him with renewed courage and strength in the prosecution of his work. In many of his letters written at this period, he expresses the most affectionate interest in his wife and the most perfect satisfaction with his connubial state.

It would, however, have been surprising if the enemies of Luther had passed in silence his marriage with a former nun. The most outrageous slanders and abominable falsehoods

might have been anticipated. Their hatred of the man who had shaken the pillars of their spiritual despotism, was also to be vented against the woman whom he had chosen for his wife. "See," cried out these despicable slanderers, "see the real design of his apostasy from the Catholic Church! It was only that he might marry." And yet Luther was not married until eight years after he had taken the first step towards the Reformation. They loaded Catharine with the most opprobrious and disgraceful epithets, and endeavored to cover her husband with shame and contempt. But they did not reflect that if Luther had been inclined to an irregular course of life, he might more easily, with much less excitement and much less censure too, have indulged his evil propensities as an unmarried monk than as a married clergyman. Even King Henry VIII. and Duke George of Saxony sent him letters most bitterly censuring his course. The language of the royal slanderer of England is especially vulgar, and his accusations are infamous. But his more recent enemies have not been less virulent. Luther, in dealing such a terrible blow on their forefathers, has fear-

fully wounded them also, and that wound will never heal. They most dishonestly perverted his language, and endeavored to dishonor the name of Catharine by the most wretchedly contrived and disgraceful fables. The principal object of Luther's enemies was to sever the matrimonial bond which united him and his wife. They exerted all their diabolical cunning to gain Catharine over by their machinations, and induce her to separate herself from Luther in order to return to the convent. Two young men, members of the University of Leipzig, were employed to write *Eulogies on Monastic Life*, and send them to Luther in the hope that they would fall into Catharine's hands, and induce her, as a penitent sinner, to resume the veil. But neither he nor his wife honored these writings with much attention at that time. They were sent back to their authors in not quite as good a condition as when received, for the servants, without Luther's knowledge, had taken special pains to deface them. They accompanied the papers with the Latin word *asini* (asses), so ingeniously arranged in a square, that beginning in the centre the same word could be read in forty different directions.

Some time after, Luther answered these writings and constructed several amusing fables on them. The treatment of these eulogies by Luther and his wife, and especially by the servants, created such an excitement in Leipzig that Jerome Walther, a councillor, found it necessary to communicate a full report of the whole transaction to the Court Chancellor of Duke George. The infamous attempt, however, to separate Luther and his wife signally failed.

The great restorer of the true gospel doctrine might have lived in open profligacy as a monk, and it would not probably have been noticed; but to marry was an unpardonable sin. The acknowledged teachers of the priests have laid down such doctrine as the following: Cardinal de Campeggi has taught that "It is a greater sin for a priest to marry than to lead an infamous life." The Jesuit Coster taught that "Although a priest who indulges the most unnatural appetite commits a great evil, yet he sins still more if he marries;" and Cornelius à Lapide remarks, "For those who have taken the vow of chastity, it is better that they live unchastely than marry." The men who taught such morals were the opponents of Luther's

marriage. The most influential of his enemies at this time was Erasmus, who, in the beginning did not disallow Luther's merits, but he was fond of ridicule and sarcasm. He slandered Catharine most infamously, but eight months afterwards he had the magnanimity to retract his false accusations.

As we have already learned, Luther had determined to give a particular wedding-festival especially for the sake of his own parents, but we have no account of his having invited the parents of his wife. Every unprejudiced reader will conclude that either her parents were dissatisfied with her flight and marriage, or, what is more probable, they were no longer living. For from the well-known letter of Luther to Koppe, we cannot even with certainty conclude that her parents were living at the time of her escape from the convent. He states that those nine nuns had most earnestly implored their parents and *relatives* to deliver them from the prison, from which we presume that some of them were orphans, and for this reason applied to their relations. But Luther's enemies still maintained that the parents of his wife were living, but were of no account, and hence not

mentioned at all. It is likely that *poverty* first moved them to place their daughter in a convent early in life. Luther and some of his cotemporaries bear testimony to the fact that she possessed no property. At one place he thus expresses himself relative to the condition of her property, "As thou gavest her to me, so I return her to thee again, O thou faithful God, who richly aboundest in all things; support, sustain, and teach her as thou hast supported, sustained, and taught me, thou Father of the orphan and judge of the widow." Even if she had taken property with her into the convent, how could she have secured it in her flight? But when Erasmus writes and says, "Luther has married a wife, a most beautiful daughter of the celebrated family of Bora, but, as is said, without a fortune," this might also proceed from the dissatisfaction of her relatives with her marriage and her flight from the convent.

But though those enemies of Luther could not exactly show the humble condition of his wife's parents, others tried hard to throw doubt, at least, on her *noble* birth. They could not deny that her mother was entitled to that distinction of rank, but they totally reject her

father's claim to it, and because Luther does not mention him in his writings, they draw the unsound conclusion that he must have belonged to the very lowest class of society. Catharine's honor would not in the least have been periled even if her father had been of humble birth. But the most unimportant circumstances were industriously used by Luther's enemies to degrade him; hence, they would not allow her distinguished birth, although the plainest proofs of the fact were given. His opponents sometimes contradicted each other. They all agreed in most scandalously calumniating him, but in their accusations they sometimes singularly differed, and often unintentionally wrote something which was more honorable to Luther than injurious. Cochlaeus, for example, charges it as the greatest sin of Luther "that he rescued from the convent nine nuns, *who were all* of *noble rank*, and, to the eternal disgrace of so many distinguished families, led them away." Could this deadly enemy of Luther only have conjectured that some of his brethren of the faith ever intended to assail Catharine's birth, he would have been more careful than to have spoken of *noble* rank and *distinguished* families.

But the testimony of one such cotemporary is proof sufficient of her noble origin, and we need not stop to refute those who maintain that there never even existed a *family* of *de Bora*.

CHAPTER IV.

Luther's Domestic Life — Character of Catharine — Perils of Luther — Sickness — Death of his Parents — Private Life — Catharine.

LUTHER led with Catharine a very peaceful and happy domestic life. It would be doing him great injustice and placing him in the rank of common men, to judge of his conjugal and domestic demeanor from his public character. Here there was no trace of that severity and violence which can only find an apology in the frequent insulting conduct of his enemies, the unrefined spirit of the times, but, above all, in his burning zeal for the glory of God and the truth of the Gospel. No! in the circle of his family he was an affectionate husband and

tender father; kind and condescending to all his household, and benevolent to the poor. In writing to Stiefel (Aug. 11, 1526), he playfully says: "My rib, Kate, salutes you. She is well, with God's help; she is amiable, obedient, and obliging in all things to a greater degree than I could have hoped for, thank heaven, so that I would not exchange my poverty for the wealth of Crœsus." When he had finished his commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, he cried out, "This is my letter to which I am betrothed; it is my Katy von Bora!" On the 31st of August, 1538, he thus writes to Bernard von Dohlen: "If I were a young man again, now since I have experienced the wickedness of the world, if a queen were offered to me after my Catharine, I would rather die than marry a second time." "I could not have a more *obedient* wife unless I would have one hewn out of stone." Many such expressions occur in his table-talk. Among other things, he says, "I hear that there are much greater faults and occasions of disagreement among married people than I find in my wife. This is an abundant reason that I should love and esteem her, because she is *sincere* and

upright, as a *pious* and *discreet* wife should be." "I have a *pious* and *faithful* wife in whom the heart of her husband doth safely trust." Prov. 31; 11. "I value her more highly than I would the whole kingdom of France and the sovereignty of Venice; for God has given me a *pious* wife." "The best and most valuable gift of God is a pious, affectionate, godly, domestic wife, with whom you can live at peace, to whom you may entrust all that you possess; yea, your very body and life."

But Catharine had in Luther not only an affectionate husband, but a man who, on account of his enlightened understanding, his wide-spread usefulness, and his undaunted heroism, deserved all the veneration he received from all the truly pious of his generation.

From this time forth, Catharine was totally and forever weaned from the monastic life, and all the anxieties for the future which may have distressed her on her first escape, had now vanished. Though Luther's worldly circumstances were not the most flourishing, yet he was aided by the liberality of the princes and other noble-minded men to such an extent, at least, that he did not absolutely suffer for the

necessaries of life.* In this respect, Catharine's circumstances were much improved. However, many dangers threatened the bold champion of truth, right, and liberty, which were calculated to disturb the happy serenity of his wife. He had several alarming attacks of sickness, which occasioned her painful solicitude. In the first year of his marriage some noblemen conspired against him because he effected the escape of thirteen nuns out of a cloister in the territory of Duke George. He himself acknowledges this in a letter to Stiefel, and says of it, "I have chased away Satan from this booty of Christ." Hence, with tears, she entreated him not to leave Wittenberg at such a perilous time when he was invited to the wedding of Spalatin, and he yielded. But he was not accustomed to be alarmed at the thunder-clouds which rolled

* His annual compensation did not amount to more than about $160, but the Elector, John Frederick, supplied him with wheat, wood, free house, clothes, &c. &c., to some extent. He inherited only 250 guilders from his father. The King of Denmark, Christian III., gave Luther towards the end of his days a pension of $50 a year. A man who was executed for murder in Leipzig in 1537, with a vain hope probably of reconciling heaven, bequeathed Luther $530, and Melanchthon $300.

over him. Even as early as 1526, he undertook a journey in company with Catharine, and yet that was the time he had most to fear. But he was never free from danger. In 1530, when his father was lying on his death-bed, he dared not venture to visit him, but wrote an affecting letter, stating that his friends positively forbade his leaving Wittenberg, lest he might be murdered. A Jewish physician of Posen was hired for two thousand golden guilders to poison him. In 1541 he was waylaid by an assassin, but escaped. Notwithstanding his vigorous constitution, which seemed to promise extreme old age, yet from early youth he was subject to frequent severe attacks of sickness, and under such circumstances we may well wonder, that besides his numerous professional labors, he was able to prepare so many theological works, to conduct so extensive a correspondence with men of every class of society, and accomplish so many journeys, which must have consumed much time.* His master-piece, The Translation

* In 1529 he wrote to Link, "I am daily buried in books, so that windows, chairs, benches, &c. &c., are full." As early as 1516 he said to Lang, "I have full employment for two secretaries. I do scarcely anything all day but write letters."

of the Bible, was a work which scarcely any learned man of the present day could have accomplished in the same space of time, under similar circumstances. Let it be remembered that the first time he ever saw the whole of the Bible in the Latin language he was already twenty-two years of age; that he had few of the preliminary aids essential to such a work, and that the German language was at that time still very imperfect. In twenty-eight years the translation of the whole Bible was finished and printed.* He suffered most from hæmorrhoidal affections, the treatment of which was little understood at that time. These attacks ap-

* Luther was aided in this work by several of his learned friends, as Melanchthon, Cruciger, Jonas, Bugenhagen, and others. He submitted his work to their review, and adopted such alterations as his judgment approved. Various sections or books were published from time to time, until finally, in 1534, the complete Bible was published. His work superseded all other previous translations, for it excelled them all in fidelity, force, and distinctness; and even now, 300 years after its appearance, with all the modern progress in criticism and biblical interpretation, and the improvements of the German language which are displayed in many more recent translations, Luther's Bible still maintains the ascendency in private and public use.

peared mysterious to him, and in his depression of mind occasioned by them, and in the indulgence of a lively imagination, he ascribed the painful anxieties which he felt, agreeably to the notions of that day, to the temptations of the devil, who tried to hinder him in prosecuting his good work by assuming various forms and appearances. Attacks of sickness, which were in part the result of his severe fastings during his monastic life, were aggravated by his extraordinary mental labors, by his sedentary habits, and the numerous painful mortifications of spirit to which his unconquerable love of the truth exposed him. Above all, it was the unhappy sacramentarian controversy in 1525 which had the most injurious influence on his health. Hence these corporeal sufferings could never be entirely removed. Yet amid all his painful and melancholy hours Catharine was to him a ministering angel. By her affectionate sympathy, her tender nursing, and prudent accommodation to his whims, she greatly relieved his bodily and mental sufferings. She had frequent occasion to display these amiable qualities, for her husband had often recurring attacks of sickness. To notice but a few in-

stances, we will state that as early as 1526 he suffered with hæmorrhoids, accompanied with severe oppression of the breast. But it was particularly in 1527 that he was attacked in a manner that brought him to the very borders of the grave. In July, he was so suddenly and dangerously seized that his wife and friends trembled for his life. But both of them displayed a greatness of soul and dignity of deportment which were truly admirable. Christian fortitude, perfect resignation to the will of God, and unshaken confidence in an all-controlling Providence, animated them both in the highest degree. They endured their present trials with pious submission, and with comfortable security they anticipated future dangers. Luther did not think that he would recover, but believed that he should have to part with the wife whose husband he had been but two years. Catharine was full of terrible apprehension of being left a poor widow and mother of one child, without being able to count much on human aid, and having no means of support. He was to leave the sacred work which he had begun, and for which he would have sacrificed his all, and she was to be dependent on the kindness of some

real and many equivocal friends. Yet Luther prayed with a submissive heart, and commended his wife to God's paternal care. "My loving and most benevolent Father! I thank thee from my heart that it was thy will I should be poor on the earth, and hence I can leave neither house, field, money, nor any other property, to my wife and son. As thou hast given her to me, so I restore her to thee," &c. He also consoled his wife with these words; "My beloved Kate, I beseech you to submit to God's gracious will, if it should please him to take me to Himself this time. You are my faithful wife, let the blind, ungodly world say what it may. Let your conduct be governed by the word of God, and hold fast to it, and thus you will have certain and constant comfort against all the temptations and blasphemies of Satan." When, at his request, they brought his infant son to him, he said, "O you good, poor little child! now I commend your beloved mother and you, poor orphan, to my good and faithful God. *You have nothing;* but God, who is the father of the orphan and the judge of the widow, will richly provide for you." Here he again turned to his wife, and said, "You know

that, excepting the silver cups, we have nothing." These, and similar expressions, awakened the most painful emotions in the heart of Catharine, and yet she tried to conceal her grief, and to encourage him, "My dear Doctor," said she, "if it is God's will, I would rather you should be with Him than with me. But it is not only I and my child who must be taken into account, and for whom your life would be valuable, but there are many pious and Christian souls who have need of your presence and services. Do not distress yourself about me; I commend you to His divine will. I trust he will graciously preserve you." Eight days after, Luther recovered, to the great joy of his wife and all his friends.

Not long after, in the same year, a contagious disease broke out in Wittenberg, which created so much alarm that the students precipitately fled, and the University was transferred to Jena. The Elector, John the Constant, advised Luther to repair to Jena also; but this main pillar of the new-born church would not leave Wittenberg, although there were cases of the contagion in his own family. Bugenhagen also remained at the post of duty.

Nov. 1, Luther wrote to Amsdorff, "My house is an hospital. I begin to feel anxious about my wife, who is in a delicate condition. My infant son has been sick these three days; he eats nothing and is extremely unwell." But these attacks were not contagious, and their alarm soon subsided. In the following year, Luther suffered from a pulmonary affection and constant headache. In 1532, he was so severely attacked with vertigo that apoplexy was apprehended. He also occasionally suffered from obstinate boils; in his later years, symptoms of calculus were also apparent. In 1536, an affection of the hip-joint confined him to bed a fortnight. But in 1537, Catharine had especial occasion to display her affectionate solicitude, for her husband was again brought to the very brink of the grave. During this year he was commanded by John Frederick, Elector of Saxony, to proceed to Smalcald on important church business. Although he suffered severely from calculus, and the weather was extremely cold, he set out on his journey on Feb. 1. But he had scarcely arrived at Smalcald, when the pains increased to such an extent, to which an obstinate ischury was super-

added, that everybody was doubtful of his recovery. The Elector, who was present, contributed everything in his power to his restoration. He visited and consoled him. On his departure, he thus addressed him: "If it should please God to take you away, be not concerned about your wife and children. I will take them into my protection." He recovered sufficiently to enter on his journey home on the 26th. Dangerous as travelling appeared to be under the circumstances, yet it was of immediate service. On the way, he was relieved of the principal cause of his intense suffering, and communicated the joyful event to his wife and the sympathizing Melanchthon. To the former he wrote, "Yesterday I left Smalcald. I was not well three days whilst there; in a word, I was dead, and I had commended you and the children to God and my gracious Elector, for I never expected to see you again; but God had mercy on me. Most fervent prayers to God were offered for me, and many tears were shed on my account. God heard these prayers, and last night I was relieved. I now feel like a new-born man. Thank God for this; and let the dear children, with Aunt Magdalena, thank

the Heavenly Father, for you had almost lost me, the earthly father. God performed wonders towards me last night through the intercession of pious persons. This I also ascribe to you, for I presume the Elector ordered word to be sent to you that I was dying, so that you might come and speak to me, or at least see me before I died. That is not necessary now, you may remain at home, for God has so mercifully helped me that I expect soon to meet you happily in our own house. To-day we are stopping at Gotha." Something similar to this he wrote to Melanchthon: but, unfortunately, he had a relapse at Gotha, and anticipated death so certainly, that he requested Bugenhagen to administer to him the Lord's Supper. As soon as Catharine heard of this she could be no longer restrained from setting out to meet him. She remained with him all the time, and accompanied him home. Thus Luther, for the present, had escaped all apparent dangers, but every year, for the ensuing nine, he was attacked by some disease. Dysentery, Rheumatism, fever, violent vertigo, and headache, painful cutaneous eruptions, and pulmonary affections, embittered all his days.

The affectionate sympathy, faithful watching, and tender nursing which he received from his wife, not only on these occasions, but always when bowed down under the immense weight of his other cares, moved him deeply. He frequently alluded to it in the most touching language. On his sick bed at Gotha, on Feb. 28, 1537, he commended Catharine, who had enlivened twelve years of his life, to Bugenhagen, and bore this favorable testimony to her character: "She has served me not only as a wife, but with all the fidelity and industry of a servant." Afterwards, he said, "I inconsiderately look to Catharine and Melanchthon for greater benefits than to Christ, and yet I know that neither they nor any human being on earth can or will ever suffer for me as he has done." Soon after, he said, "How intensely I longed after my family when I was lying at Smalcald, almost dead! I thought I should never see them again. How painful the idea of separation was! I now believe that this natural inclination and love which a man has for his wife, and children for their parents, are most intense in dying persons." In his last will, (Jan. 6, 1542,) he said of her "that she

had always been a pious and faithful wife, and she always conducted herself handsomely and worthily, as became a pious and faithful spouse."*

But Catharine's love for her husband was extended also to his parents. The most striking proof of this she gave, when, in Feb., 1530, Luther's father was lying very sick. She most heartily wished that he might be conveyed to Wittenberg, where she could nurse him. "Dear Father," wrote Luther to him, "my brother Jacob has informed me that you are dangerously sick. I wished most eagerly to go and see you, but my friends dissuaded me from my purpose, fearing the danger to which I would expose myself, for you know that the Peasants are so violently opposed to me.† But it would

* Jerome Weller von Wolsdorff, Luther's intimate friend, has said, "I remember hearing Luther often say that he always regarded himself extremely happy that God had given him such a prudent and thrifty wife, who cherished him so tenderly in sickness, &c. Whenever Dr. Luther was depressed, she, like a sensible wife, always consulting his welfare, secretly invited Dr. Jonas to her table, so that he might cheer him by his interesting conversation. She knew that no one could so well entertain him as Dr. Jonas.

† This was during the Peasants' War.

rejoice me greatly if it were possible for you and mother to come to us. My wife also, with tears, expresses her desire that you should come. We will here nurse you most tenderly." But the father was unable to go, and died in a few months after, whilst Luther was residing at Coburg, where he had concealed himself during the diet of Augsburg. As soon as Catharine heard of the event, she was very solicitous about the effect of the intelligence on her absent husband, of whose affectionate attachment to his father she was well aware. She wrote to him a letter full of consolation, and in order more effectually to calm his troubled heart, she sent him a likeness of his favorite child, Magdalena, at that time an infant of a year old. She was not disappointed in her hopes. His secretary, Veit Dietrich, answered the letter, and said, "You have done a good work in sending the likeness to the doctor; he forgets many troublesome things in looking at it. He has hung it on the wall opposite the table at which we dine. When he first saw it, he did not recognize it. 'Why,' said he ''Lena's complexion is dark!' But now he is remarkably

well pleased with it, and the more he looks at it the better he likes it. * * * * I pray you, do not be troubled about the doctor; he is, thank heaven, well and in good spirits. For the first two days he was much depressed respecting his father's death, but has now recovered his usual vivacity." When, in the following year, Luther's pious mother was attacked with a dangerous sickness and his numerous engagements did not allow him to visit her, he wrote her a consolatory letter, the conclusion of which expresses in a very striking manner the cordial affection which Catharine and her children entertained for this excellent woman. "My wife and children are praying for you. They weep and say, 'Grandmother is very sick.'" She also died, to Luther's most profound regret, on June 30, 1531.

It was not only in seasons of affliction and distress that Catharine deeply sympathized with her husband. In times of prosperity and rejoicing she equally displayed her interest, and was ever proud of his growing reputation and of the honors conferred on him.

These are proofs sufficient that their matrimonial life was happy; yet the foulest slanders

were heaped upon them by the enemies of the cause of which Luther was now the acknowledged champion.

Luther awarded to his wife the praise of unconditional obedience, and agreeably to the custom of the times she always saluted him as *Herr Doctor*. During the first years of his matrimonial life particularly, when he had recovered from his attacks of melancholy, and his general health had improved, he was almost always in excellent spirits. He treated his domestics in the kindest manner, and his whole household was conducted in a way which contributed to the happiness of every member. He acceded to Catharine's supreme control over the affairs of the family, and never interfered, except when he deemed it absolutely necessary. He often playfully addressed her as *Mrs. Doctor and Professoress*, and sometimes as *Master Catharine*. All the world knew that this was but the outpouring of a sportive disposition and an affectionate heart.

CHAPTER V.

Income — Expenses — Hospitality — Charity — Diet — Afflictions — Despondency — Journeys — Death.

LUTHER'S income was disproportionate to his expenses. He has often said "that he gave more out than he took in." His pay at this time amounted to but 200 guilders, and his own family expenses to 500. Besides, he aided his poor relatives, and was obliged to perform many expensive journeys on business relating to the Reformation. His eminent position in society often subjected him to invitations to assume the relation of godfather, and this always levied contributions on his purse. He was also obliged to make numerous marriage presents, and almost daily to entertain strangers, which compelled him to keep a corresponding number of servants. His expenses were so great that sometimes he was embarrassed with considerable debts. He says, "I am unfit for housekeeping; I am made quite poor by the necessary support of my destitute relations and

the daily demands of strangers." In writing to another friend, he says, "You know that I am quite oppressed by my large domestic establishment, for through my thoughtlessness I have, during this year, made debts to the amount of more than 100 guilders. I have pledged three silver cups at one place for 50 guilders; but the Lord, who chastises my folly, will deliver me. Hence it is that Cranach and Aurifaber will no longer take me as security, for they observe that I have an empty purse. I have given them my fourth cup for 12 guilders, which they have loaned to Herrman. But why is it that my purse is so completely exhausted —no, not quite exhausted; but why am I so deeply immersed in debt? I believe that no one will charge me with parsimony, avarice," &c. He sometimes had the honor of entertaining persons of exalted rank. Elizabeth, the sister of Christian II., King of Denmark, who had fled from her husband on account of his cruel treatment of her because she had abandoned popery, and the Duchess Ursula of Münsterberg, an escaped nun, had often been his guests for upwards of three months at a time, and it is no small matter for a poor man to entertain

a princess. Many monks and nuns who had escaped from convents had often imposed themselves on his hospitality, and sometimes shamefully deceived him. In 1537 he took into his house his relative and countryman, Agricola, with his wife and family, and kept them for a long time, until Luther procured a professorship for him. Luther's five children were now growing up, and their education was by no means neglected, and even the fields which his wife owned, near Wittenberg and Zoldorf, demanded no little outlay. To all this was superadded that peculiar disposition which has, however, characterized many great minds, which is, a perfect contempt of all earthly possessions. The grounds of this he sought and found in the Bible. When with scorn he rejected all offers of gold and dignities on condition of renouncing his faith, which his enemies made, he did right; but it must be confessed that as a father of a family he was too careless about their wants. Thus, when some one reminded him that he might, at least, lay up a little property for his family, he replied, "That I shall not do; for otherwise they will not trust to God or their own exertions, but to their

money." Thus he presented all his manuscripts to the printers, who were at that time also booksellers, and when they offered him 400 guilders annually for the privilege of printing and selling his books, he rejected the offer, and said, "I will not sell the grace of God. I have enough." Only occasionally he asked for a copy of his books as a present to a friend. He charged no fee for his lectures. "It was my intention," said he, "after I was married, to lecture for pay. But as God anticipated me, I have all my life sold no copy of my books, nor read lectures for money. And if it please God, I will carry this honor to the grave with me." When the Elector, John the Constant, in 1529, designed to honor him with a share in a productive silver mine at Schneeberg as a compliment for his translation of the Bible, he replied, "It much better becomes me to pay the amount of my share with a *pater noster*, that the ores may continue productive and the product may be well applied." This he confirmed soon after, (Sept. 8, 1530,) with these words, "I have never taken a penny for my translation, and never asked it." And at another place he says, "If I did not feel such a

painful concern *for his sake who died for me*, the whole world could not give me money enough to write a book or translate any portion of the Bible. *I am not willing to be rewarded by the world for my labor; the world is too poor for that!*" Melanchthon promised him 1000 guilders compensation if he would finish the translation of Æsop, begun in 1530, and dedicate it to some great personage; but Luther desired to labor exclusively for the diffusion of the Gospel, and write theological works, for which he would receive no pay. Another friend made him a present of 200 guilders, which he generously divided among poor students. When, in 1529, Bugenhagen brought him a gift of 100 guilders from a rich gentleman, he gave Melanchthon the half of it. As early as 1520, he received a bequest of 150 guilders from Dr. Heinrich Becke of Naumburg, and in 1521, a person named Marcus Schart presented him with 50 guilders, which he divided with his prior, Breisger. When the Elector, John the Steadfast, in 1542, ordered a tax to be levied to raise money to carry on the war against the Turks, and exempted Luther's property, the latter would not consent

to it, but for the sake of the example had property to the amount of 610 guilders assessed.* Many other similar instances of his remarkable disinterestedness, which, however, were not always worthy of imitation, might be mentioned. He was liberal and benevolent as even few rich men are, and hence it is that his children received no large inheritance from him. Thus on one occasion a very poor man applied to him for help. He had no money at hand, and his wife was sick; but he took the donation which had been made to his infant at its recent baptism, and gave it to the applicant. The sick wife, who soon missed the money out of the savings-box, expressed her displeasure, but Luther meekly replied, "God is rich; he will provide in some other way."

At another time, a young man who had finished his studies, and was about to leave Wittenberg, made a similar request. Luther was again destitute of funds. With sincere sympathy he deplored his inability to aid the youth; but when he observed his deep distress, his eye fell on a silver cup which had been pre-

* This property was obtained by gifts from the benevolent.

sented to him by the Elector. He looked inquiringly at his wife; her countenance seemed to reply, no! but he hastily snatched the cup and gave it to the student. The latter was much astonished, and was unwilling to take it. Catharine also, by winks and looks, intimated to her husband not to press the acceptance of it on the stranger. But Luther, with a great effort, pressed the sides of the cup together and gave it to the young man, saying, "I have no use for a silver cup. Here, take it; carry it to a goldsmith, and keep all you can get for it."

Luther was indebted to the punctuality, thrift, and economy of his wife, for the small property in land, furniture, and books, which he left at his death. She has been charged with parsimony as well as with a multitude of other sins by Luther's enemies, but there is no evidence to sustain the accusation. If she was economical when her husband had no guests in his house — which was not often the case — it rather redounded to her credit, and arose from necessity. This course was pursued with his sanction. He was always temperate in his diet. Sometimes, even when he was in good health, he partook of no substantial food

for four days together. At other times a little bread and a herring sufficed for a day; or, that he might study the more intensely, bread and salt constituted his meal. Of course, at other times, he lived more generously, but always within the bounds of moderation.

Catharine not only sympathized most sincerely with her husband in all his joys and sorrows, but she herself suffered severe afflictions, some of which were calculated to fill a mother's heart with inexpressible anguish. Some of these have been already alluded to. In August, 1538, they were both attacked with fever, and in July, 1539, they providentially escaped a violent death. Luther had had a new cellar constructed, which he went to inspect in company with his wife. They had scarcely left the cellar, when the ground caved in with a terrible crash. In loud thanksgivings to God they expressed their sense of this miraculous deliverance. In January, 1540, Catharine was brought nigh to death at the birth of a child. To Luther's great joy, she gradually recovered. The death of their second daughter, Magdalena, in 1542, at the age of fourteen — the first, Elizabeth, had died in 1528 — bowed

her heart deeply, and overwhelmed her with sorrow. Scarcely had the pious sufferer endured these severe visitations with the resignation becoming a true Christian, when she was called on to deplore the death of her most intimate and valuable friend, the wife of Dr. Jonas. This unexpected event was so much the more painful to Luther, inasmuch as when in secret he reflected on his own departure out of this world, he always reckoned on the wife of Dr. Jonas as the comforter of his widow and children.

In 1545, the three sons of Luther and his yet surviving daughter, Margaretta, were all at the same time attacked with the measles, and the latter also suffered in addition, from a severe and dangerous fever.

About this time, Luther, very unexpectedly to his friends, determined to leave Wittenberg. His strength was exhausted by disease, and by his numerous literary labors. He was disappointed and chagrined also on various accounts, and longed for repose. As soon as this became known, Bugenhagen and others were sent to him on the part of the University and the town, whose tears and entreaties prevailed on him to

remain for the present. But in July, 1545, he was bent on carrying out his determination, and travelled in company with his eldest son, John, by way of Löbnitz and Leipzig to Merseburg, where he visited Prince George, of Anhalt, whom, on this occasion, he solemnly consecrated to the office of Coadjutor of the Chapter of the Cathedral. During his stay in Leipzig, he wrote (July 28), to his wife, "I should like to arrange it so that it would not be necessary for me to return to Wittenberg. My feelings are so alienated that I do not care any longer about being there. I also wish that you would sell our house and other property. I wish you would return the large house to my gracious master,* and it would be better for you to settle at Zallsdorff whilst I yet live; for after my death you will hardly find a support in Wittenberg, hence you had better do it during my lifetime." Catharine was extremely surprised at this determination; but as her husband had enjoined it upon her to inform Bugenhagen and Melanchthon of his purpose, and to request the former to take leave of the congregation in his name, she, at least, com-

* The Elector had presented him with a house.

plied with this wish. But not so the University. As soon as the members had learned the purport of his letter, they sent not only a copy of it to the Elector, and a letter to his Grace, beseeching him to influence Luther to return; but they and the town council also sent Bugenhagen and Melanchthon, and some other deputies, as a committee to see him. The Elector himself wrote to him, promising to render his condition at Wittenberg more comfortable, and summoned him to appear at his palace at Torgau for further conversation on the subject. Luther instantly obeyed the summons, and appeared at Torgau. The Elector persuaded him to return to Wittenberg. Sick and depressed in heart he arrived there on the 18th of August, where he was received with open arms by all his friends.

But this gratification was of short duration for them and Catharine; for in January, 1546, completely debilitated by the effects of protracted sickness, he entered upon a journey of another character, from which, alas! he never returned. His youngest sister, Dorothea, was married to Paul Mackenrot, who was in the service of the Elector. The family of Macken-

rot possessed productive silver-mines in the duchy of Mansfeld, which excited the envy of the dukes of Mansfeld, and led them to the determination of securing to themselves the entire products of the mines, for before they had received only the tenth and some other perquisites. As soon as Luther heard of this unjust proceeding, he undertook to maintain the rights of his brother-in-law, and in 1540 wrote to Duke Albert on the subject; but his intercession was fruitless. In 1542, he renewed his attempts, but without any favorable result. In 1545, he travelled to Eisleben and to Mansfeld on the same mission, but all to no effect. Soon after, Luther was urgently entreated by the Dukes themselves (of whom, Albert was a Protestant, and the other two, Philip and John George, were still Catholics,) to appear personally at Eisleben in order to settle this difficulty as well as some others existing among them. Although his health was in a wretched condition, he promised to go. After he had preached in Wittenberg, the last time, on January 17, 1546, he took leave of his friends, and on the 23d, he departed, accompanied by his three sons; John, 19 years

of age, Martin 14, and Paul 13. He passed through Halle, where he visited his friend, Dr. Jonas, at that time pastor in that city. Jonas accompanied him to Eisleben; but as he approached that city, he was so exhausted that he fainted, and they were apprehensive of his death; but he was conveyed to a house where they rubbed him with warm cloths, and he was soon restored. He arrived safe at Eisleben on the 28th, but a violent attack was soon renewed. Catharine, who on the departure of her husband could easily have anticipated these attacks, on having been informed of them by the eldest son, John, who had been sent back, forwarded some remedies from her own domestic medicine-chest, the good effects of which he had often experienced. On the 1st and 6th of February he communicated to her the state of his own health and of the affairs at Mansfeld, and entreated her to lay aside any undue anxiety about himself. But he soon expressed an intense desire to return home. He wrote to that effect on the 10th, and again in a jocose style besought her not to be uneasy on his account. But he was never to see her again. As he anticipated, he was destined to die in the

place of his birth.* Although he suffered keenly from pulmonary affection, he not only preached four times, but performed much other important business. But his end had come, and he died on February 18, 1546, in the 63d year of his age. Dr. Jonas and the court preacher at Mansfeld, Michel Coclius, who, with others, were present at his death, immediately communicated the melancholy event to the Elector, and requested his Grace to issue orders respecting the funeral, as well as to have a letter of consolation written to his bereaved widow. The intelligence was conveyed so rapidly to Torgau, that the Elector, on the same evening of the day on which Luther died, answered the letter, and gave immediate orders in relation to his funeral.

* He was born in Eisleben on the 10th of November, 1483.

CHAPTER VI.

Catharine, a Widow — Her Support — Sufferings — Journeys — Death.

No one was more deeply distressed at his death than the mourning widow. For more than twenty years she had lived with him in uninterrupted harmony; had sought to alleviate his sufferings, and had shared his joys; and she was not permitted to see him die nor minister to his last wants! Even if he did die among friends, yet she was not there to smooth his pillow and to perform those tender offices which an affectionate wife alone knows how to do. When on the 22d of February the corpse was conveyed to Wittenberg and deposited in the castle church, and all the inhabitants of the city went to meet the melancholy procession, there stood Catharine weeping, and with her children looked on her deceased husband.

She survived him nearly seven years, and cherished his memory most affectionately. Though his enemies assailed him most virulently

when he was no longer present to defend himself, yet she never allowed her affection to cool nor her interest in his work and reputation to abate.

The black velvet cloth which had covered the funeral car came into the possession of the widow, and for many years it was preserved among Luther's posterity as a valuable memento. Neither did the Elector forget her. He wrote her a letter of condolence, in which he sought to comfort her on the grounds of the happy death of her husband, and the secret, wise councils of God. At the same time, he repeated his assurances of his protection of her and her children.

Although Luther had expressed a desire that Catharine should remove from Wittenberg, fearing that after his death she might not be able to support herself there, yet induced by good reasons, she resolved to spend the remainder of her days in that place; for where could she expect to find better friends than in Wittenberg? Bugenhagen, Cruciger, Melanchthon, and others, were still living, who were her counsellors and comforters; and Wittenberg was also the place where her sons had

already begun their education, and where they could most advantageously finish it.

Luther had, some time before his death, made ample provision, consisting of various kinds of property, for his wife,* which she was to hold independent of her children, in the event of her remaining a widow. In the document conveying it to her he speaks of her in the most exalted terms as a pious woman, a faithful wife, and an affectionate mother. The property thus left was far from being sufficient to maintain the widow and her children. The Elector of Saxony, agreeably to his promise, contributed to her support. The dukes of Mansfeld and the King of Denmark also liberally came to her help. The Elector, John Frederick, of Saxony, who had already paid the funeral expenses, thus wrote to Dr. Schurf, Professor of Medicine and Rector of the University: "And as we have heard that the widow of the sainted Luther is in need of pecuniary assistance, ... we send you by this messenger 100 gold Groschen for her use."

* All the property he ever owned was received from his father, his friends, and the Elector. He never accumulated any by his own savings.

He also wrote to Cruciger and Melanchthon, the guardians of the children, to select a teacher for the two younger sons, Martin and Paul, with whom they should also board. He directed that with regard to the oldest son, John, they should wait six months longer, to ascertain whether he was inclined or qualified to study a learned profession, and if not, the Elector promised to give him employment in his palace as a clerk or secretary.* To enable the guardians to execute his wishes with regard to the children, the Elector sent them 2000 guilders. He likewise afterwards sent the same sum to the widow. The dukes of Mansfeld, for whose benefit Luther had undertaken many journeys and suffered much trouble, were not behind; in the same year they established a fund of 2000 guilders for the benefit of the widow and children, from which they drew an annual interest of 100 guilders. Part of the capital only was paid, for when Catharine died, in 1552, 1000 guilders still stood to her credit. The year after Luther's death, Christian III., King of

* This son, John, afterwards studied law at Wittenberg, and subsequently filled responsible offices under several successive Electors.

Denmark, transferred for her benefit 50 dollars, the remainder of a sum which he had previously granted to Luther and several of his friends. Catharine wrote to the King, expressing her profound gratitude for this act of benevolence.

But she was soon called on to experience additional sorrows. The Smalcald War had already broken out in 1546, which brought desolation into many peaceful and happy families. Catharine did not escape the general calamity. The Elector, John Frederick, who would certainly have done more for her, was taken prisoner at the battle of Muhlberg, April 24, 1547; Wittenberg was besieged on the 5th of May, and on the 25th, Charles V., with his Spanish troops, entered the city as conqueror. All the faithful subjects of the Elector, and many persons who had embraced the doctrines of the Reformation, had left before the siege. The widow of the Reformer, with her children, could not possibly remain behind. She accompanied Dr. George Major, Professor of Theology, to Magdeburg, and thence, sustained by the town council of Helmstadt, she went under Melanchthon's protection to Brunswick, from whence Dr. Major was to conduct her to

Copenhagen. Here she expected further protection and support from the King of Denmark, as her illustrious benefactor, the Elector of Saxony, could no longer assist her. But she did not proceed farther than Gifhorn, near Brunswick; for a proclamation appeared promising a safe return and the secure possession of their property to all who had left the country. It seemed best to her, as well as to Melanchthon, to return to the home she had abandoned. But her life, from this period, was an unbroken series of sorrows. The assistance she had formerly received from the liberality of the Elector was withdrawn; the annual contribution of the King of Denmark — although he had promised further help — had not been sent since 1548, and her small real estate was loaded with taxes. It would have been difficult for her to support herself and four children if she had not, some time subsequently, mortgaged her little farm at Zillsdorff for 400 guilders, and pawned some silver-ware for 600 guilders. She also rented out several rooms in her house, as her husband had done, and boarded the occupants, and thus she contrived to gain a meagre subsistence.

In the beginning of the year 1548, she

travelled with Melanchthon to Leipzig, in order to solicit from the imperial assessor some diminution of the oppressive war tax. Melanchthon also wrote to the King of Denmark, entreating him to continue the annual contribution which he made during Luther's lifetime. Bugenhagen wrote similar letters to his Majesty, begging him, for Luther's sake, to come to the help of "the poor widow and her children." But as these repeated appeals were fruitless, she herself wrote to him, October 6, 1550. In this letter, she calls to his mind the services which her illustrious husband had rendered to the cause of Christianity, and his Majesty's former liberality to him. In pathetic terms she represents her destitute condition and the severity of the times, occasioned by the existing wars. She says, "Your Imperial Majesty is the only king on earth to whom we poor Christians can fly for protection, and God will doubtless richly reward your Majesty for the kindness you have bestowed on poor Christian preachers and their widows and children." This letter did not immediately produce the desired result. Two years afterwards, when most sorely pressed by want, she repeated her entreaty, and wrote

again. In this letter she complains of her forsaken condition, and declares that she had been more unkindly treated by professed friends than enemies. She writes in a deeply despondent tone, and seems to be on the brink of despair. Bugenhagen seconded this appeal to the King, and it was successful; a contribution was received which relieved her immediate wants and comforted her desponding heart.

Luther's exalted merits were not always recognized, at least, not in the way in which they should have been. The widow of the man who conferred favors on thousands at the expense of extraordinary self-sacrifice, often pined in misery, and paid the severe penalty of his disinterestedness and liberality. With much truth could it be said in a discourse commemorative of her virtues: "During the war she wandered from place to place with her orphan children, enduring the most trying privations and perils, and, besides the numerous trials of her widowhood, she also encountered much ingratitude from many, and she was often shamefully deceived by those even from whom she had a right to expect kindnesses on account

of the inappreciable services of her husband to the Church."

After the peace of Passau (July 31, 1552), security was re-established for the Protestants, and the former elector of Saxony was restored to liberty.

About this time a contagious disease broke out in Wittenberg, and all the members of the University removed to Torgau. Catharine also determined to leave the place with her two younger sons, Martin and Paul (John was studying at Konigsberg), and her only daughter, Margaret, was to follow them a short time after. On the journey the horses became unmanageable and ran away with the carriage. Catharine, more concerned about the children than her own safety, and with the hope of facilitating their escape, leaped out of the vehicle and fell violently into a ditch full of water. This painful accident gave such a severe shock to her system that she was conveyed to Torgau in a very weak condition, where she took her bed and never left it alive. Her illness increased from day to day, and soon assumed the decided character of consumption. Two months after, December 20, 1552,

she died in the 54th year of her age. Her funeral was attended by an immense crowd of persons. The professors, students, and citizens, united in demonstrations of respect for the deceased widow of the illustrious reformer.

During the whole period of her sickness, she comforted herself with the promises of God's word. She heartily prayed for a peaceful departure out of this vale of tears. She frequently commended the Church and her children to the continued protection of God, and her daily supplication was that the true doctrine, which the Lord had given to the world through her deceased husband, might be transmitted uncorrupted to posterity.

A plain monument in the *city church* of Torgau designates the place where her remains repose. On the monument or tombstone there is a recumbent statue, the size of life, with an open Bible pressed to the heart. The inscription is, Anno 1552, den 20 December. Ist in Gott selig entschlaffen alhier Zu Torgau Herrn D. Martin Luther's Seligen hinterlassene Wittwe Katharina von Bora.

CHAPTER VII.

Luther's Children — Domestic Character — Catharine.

CATHARINE had been the mother of six children, three sons and three daughters. 1. *John*, born June 7, 1526; studied law, and became a civil officer in the service of the Elector of Saxony; died October 27, 1575, aged 50 years. 2. *Elizabeth;* born December 10, 1527, died August 3, 1528. 3. *Magdalena;* born May 4, 1529; died September 20, 1542, aged 14; 4. *Martin;* born November 7, 1531 — studied theology; died March 3, 1565, aged 34. 5. *Paul;* born January 28, 1533 — studied medicine, and became court physician to the Elector of Saxony; died March 8, 1593, aged 61 years. 6. *Margaret;* born December 17, 1534; died 1570, aged 36 years.

Luther was accustomed to say, "The more children we have, the more happiness we enjoy. They are the loveliest fruits and bonds of the domestic life." He was never more happy than in the circle of his family, and whoever saw

him there forgot that he was the man who spoke without fear or trembling with emperors, kings, and nobles. He was much averse to noisy entertainments. "I lose too much time at such festal gatherings with the citizens. I do not know what demon it is that prevents me from abandoning them, and yet they do me much harm," said he. It was in the bosom of his family and in the company of a few select friends in which he sought the most agreeable relaxation from the burdensome cares of his life, and gathered fresh vigor for his arduous labors. Surrounded by his wife and children, and by the side of his intimate friends, as Spalatin, Bugenhagen, Cruciger, Melanchthon, and a few others, he took part in the innocent amusements of life with a heart full of gratitude to God, who favored him with these evening relaxations. In 1543, he celebrated his 62d birthday, and invited Melanchthon, Bugenhagen, Cruciger, George Major, and Eber; it was the last time he celebrated that day. Subjects of solemn import came up for conversation. Luther, in a prophetic spirit, said, "As long as I live, with God's help, there will be no danger, and Germany will continue peaceful;

but when I die, then pray! There will be really need of prayer; our children shall have to grasp their weapons, and there will be sad times for Germany. Hence, I say, pray diligently after my death." He then turned to Eber particularly, and said, "Your name is Paul; hence be careful, after Paul's example, to preserve and defend the doctrine of that Apostle."

Luther was a man of a sociable disposition, always enjoying conversation enlivened by wit and edifying anecdote. He excelled in spicy conversation himself, and was the life of every circle of distinguished men. But he especially found the sweetest enjoyment in conversation with his wife and children, and often, too, from the innocent prattle of the latter he derived no ordinary edification. When his heart was sad, he would take one of them into his arms and tenderly caress it. Thus, on more than one occasion, he took the youngest child, and, pressing it to his bosom, with deep emotion exclaimed, "Ah! what a blessing these little ones are, of which the vulgar and the obstinate are not worthy." On another occasion he said, "I am richer than all papal theologians in the

world, for I am contented with little. I have a wife and six children, whom God has bestowed on me; such treasures the papistic divines do not deserve." Little Martin was once playing with a dog; "See," said Luther, who took a religious view of the most ordinary circumstances, and thus also in social life he became the teacher of those around him; "See," said he, "this child preaches God's word in its actions; for God says, 'Have, then, dominion over the fishes of the sea and the beasts of the earth,' for the dog suffers himself to be governed by the child." On one occasion, this same child was speaking of the enjoyments of heaven, and said "In heaven, loaves of bread grow on the trees." The father replied with a smile, "The life of children is the happiest and best of all, for they have no worldly cares; they know nothing about fanatics and errorists in the church, and have only pure thoughts and pleasant reflections." He was amusing himself one day with the child, and said, "We were all once in this same happy state of mind in Eden; simple, upright, without guile or hypocrisy — we were sincere, just as this child speaks of God, and in earnest."

At another time, he remarked that Martin afforded him special delight because he was his youngest child. "We do not find such natural kindness in old persons; it does not flow so freely and fully. That which is colored or feigned loses our favor; it is not so impressive; it does not afford as much pleasure as that which springs up naturally from the heart. Hence children are the best playmates; they speak and do everything sincerely and naturally. How Abraham's heart must have beat," he continued, "when he was called on to sacrifice his son! I do not think he told Sarah anything about it! I could contend with God if he demanded anything similar of me." Here the maternal feeling of Catharine was roused, and she observed, "I cannot believe that God could demand of parents the slaughter of their children." He removed her objections by reminding her of the greater sacrifice which God the Father made by offering his own son as a ransom for our sins.

Margaretta was once speaking to her father of Jesus, the angels, and heaven. Deeply moved, he exclaimed, "Oh! how much better than ours is the faith and life of children! The word which they hear they accept with joy and

without any doubts, and are happy. But we old fools have painful anxieties, and dispute long. Well has Christ said, 'Unless ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.' Christmas, particularly, was a season of joyful festival in Luther's family. No annual fair, such as are to this day held in Germany, passsed by in which he did not purchase presents for his children. With deep regret he wrote to his wife, when he was in Torgau, in 1532, that he could find nothing in that town to buy for the little ones at home.

Vocal and instrumental music was a frequent source of family entertainment, especially after supper. Luther himself accompanied it with the flute or the lute, both of which he played skilfully. He often invited accomplished singers, and thus held family concerts in his house. When his time and the weather permitted, he repaired to what was afterwards called *Luther's Spring*, which he himself discovered, and over which, after his marriage, he had a neat summer-house erected. He spent many an hour of pleasant enjoyment in his garden, with his wife engaged with her needle,

and the children playing around him. Here he often invited his friends to exhibit to them the luxuriant fruit of his own cultivation. As the children increased in years, especially the sons, he made them his companions. He took them with him on his numerous journeys, and they accompanied him on his last and eventful tour to the place of his birth, and, as it proved, the place of his death. That he might enjoy the society of his wife as much as possible, he pursued his labors with her at his side or invited her into his study. She often copied his manuscripts for the press, and otherwise rendered aid in writing. He communicated to her everything of special interest relating to the progress of the Reformation not only orally when at home, but by letter during his absence. He also frequently read aloud for her entertainment, and sometimes even extracts from the books of his opponents, such as Erasmus and others. He often gave her striking passages of Scripture to commit to memory, such as Psalm 31, which was particularly applicable to her condition after his death, just as though he had anticipated it years before. She, on the other hand, often urged him to the perform-

ance of pressing duties, especially answering letters. Her participation in his affairs was kindly reciprocated by him. He patiently listened to all her requests, and in his letters executed many of her commissions. It was only when he desired to complete some work which allowed no postponement that he dispensed with her presence. At such times, he locked himself in his study for days, and ate nothing but bread and salt, that he might, without interruption, pursue the work in hand. This often occurred, and he would not allow himself to be disturbed. On one occasion he had been thus locked up for three days; she sought him everywhere — shed bitter tears — knocked at all the doors and called him, but no one answered. She had the door opened by a locksmith, and found her husband profoundly absorbed in the explanation of the 22d Psalm. She was proceeding to reprimand him for occasioning such painful anxiety, but he was impatient of the interruption to his studies, pointed to the Bible, and said, "Do you think, then, that I am doing anything bad? do you not know that I must work as long as it is day, for the night cometh in which no man can

work?" But his tone and look sufficiently indicated to her that he was, after all, not unduly excited. At his social assemblies, his walks for recreation, and short excursions into the country, she was his inseparable companion as often as circumstances permitted. When numerous business calls necessarily compelled him to leave home, he wrote to her the most affectionate and often the most humorous letters.

The birth of his first child (June 7, 1526,) afforded him peculiar gratification. He communicated the fact to many of his correspondents in a strain of pleasant humor, and, of course, received their congratulations in return. The child was baptized soon after birth by Dr. Rörer, and named *John* by the grandfather. Bugenhagen, Jonas, and the painter, Cranach, senior, were his godfathers. From his earliest years this boy excited the liveliest hopes in his parents on account of his uncommon mental qualities, and it was he who gave occasion to the preparation by the father of several excellent books for children. Luther possessed the rare faculty of letting himself down to the capacity of children without himself becoming a child. This son's name often occurs in the

letters of Luther, and he is always mentioned as a lad of uncommon promise and an agreeable plaything to his father and mother. He thus writes to Hausman: "Besides this, there is nothing new, except that my Lord has blessed my Kate and made her a present of a healthy son. Thanks and praise for his unspeakable goodness. Mother and child send their respects to you." Sometime after he wrote to Spalatin, "My little Hans salutes you. He is now teething, and begins to scold everybody about him with the most amiable reproaches. Kate also wishes you every blessing, and particularly that you also may have a little Spalatin, who may teach you what she boasts of having learned from her boy, viz: the joys of matrimonial life, of which the Pope and his satellites are not worthy." Luther's friends were much attached to this child on account of his amiable disposition, and sent him many presents suitable to his age. When the boy was yet but four years old, his father wrote to him the following letter: "Grace and peace in Christ, my dearest little son. It pleases me much to hear that you love to learn and to pray. Continue in this good way, my child; when I come home I will bring

you a beautiful present. I know where there is a beautiful garden into which many children go. They wear gilded garments and gather all manner of fruit from under the trees; they sing, leap, and are happy. They also have beautiful little horses with golden bridles and silver saddles. I asked the man who owns the garden what sort of children they were. He replied, 'They are children who love to pray, to learn and serve God.' Then I said, 'My dear sir, I also have a son called little Hans Luther; may he not also go into the garden, that he, too, may eat these beautiful apples and pears, and ride these nice horses and play with these good children?' He answered, 'Every little boy who loves to pray and learn, and is good, may come into the garden, Lippus and Jost* also, and if they all come together they shall also have all sorts of musical instruments, and dance and shoot with little crossbows.' And he pointed out to me a meadow in the garden suited for a children's playground, and there were hanging golden instruments of music and beautiful silver crossbows. But it was yet early, and the children had not yet

* Sons of Melanchthon and Jonas.

eaten their breakfast, hence I could not wait to see the children dance and play, and I said to the man, 'Ah, my dear sir, I will go without delay and write all this to my beloved little son, Hans, that he may diligently pray, learn well, and be pious, so that he, too, may come into this garden; but he has a little sister, Lehna, whom he must bring with him.' Then the man said, 'It must be so; go and write to him.' For this reason, dear son, learn and pray, and tell Lippus and Jost also to do the same, and then you shall all go into the garden. I commend you to God. Kiss Lehna for me. Your dear Father, M. L., 1530."

The prudent discipline of the mother, exercised with tender earnestness, gradually developed the moral and intellectual faculties of this youth in an eminent degree, and this, combined with his religious and scientific attainments, as subsequently displayed, afforded the father unspeakable gratification. In his 15th year this youth received the most honorable testimonial of his industry in study and general excellence of character from John William, the second son of the Elector, John Frederick, promising further encouragement and aid in

the prosecution of his studies. When he was properly qualified by preliminary attainments to attend a higher school, he was sent to the Gymnasium at Torgau. Afterwards, he studied law at Wittenberg and Konigsberg, and on his return from his travels in various countries of Europe he was appointed Court Councillor by John William, in which office he subsequently served under the brother of the Elector. He was dismissed at his own request, and entered the service of Duke Albert in Konigsberg, and died October 28, 1575, aged 49 years.

His second child, Elizabeth, was born during the prevalence of the contagious disease in Wittenberg before alluded to. She lived only nine months, and Luther's grief at her death was excessive. He thus writes to Hausman: "Never could I have believed a parent's heart could be so tender towards children; seldom have I mourned so deeply. My sorrow is like that of a woman."

The death of his third child, Magdalena, at the age of 14, was a severe affliction. She was a girl of unusual promise; amiable, gifted, and pious. Her complete resignation to the will of God — her vivid conception of the doctrines of

the Bible — her strong faith in the Saviour, and her filial and religious virtues, distinguished her far above many of her tender years. She was for a long time confined to bed, and she felt that her end was rapidly drawing nigh. She ardently desired to see her brother John, who was a student at the academy at Torgau. The father gratified her wish, and despatched a messenger to summon the absent son to the death-bed of his sister. Luther, as far as was possible, watched by the side of the dying child. Although the trial was severe, his patient submission to the will of God was characteristic of the man and the Christian. "Alas!" sighed he, "I love this child most tenderly; but O, God, as it is thy will to take her to thyself, I cheerfully resign her into thy hands." Then he advanced to the bed and spoke to the suffering child, "Magdalena, my daughter, you would willingly remain with your father on earth, and yet you also desire to go to your Father in heaven." On which she replied, "Yes, dearest father, just as it pleases God." He continued, "Dearest child, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Overcome by emotion, he turned away and said:

"Oh! how I love this suffering child! but if the flesh is now so strong, what will then the spirit be!—well, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's." When she was breathing her last, the mother, overwhelmed with sorrow, retired from the couch; Luther threw himself on his knees, wept convulsively, and implored God to release the child from suffering; he then took her by the hand — and she died. The father at once had recourse to the Scriptures to seek consolation for his grievous loss. He opened the book, and the passage, Romans 14; 7, first arrested his attention: "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." This expressive passage was as a balsam to his wounded heart. When the body was deposited in the coffin, he said, "Thou dear Magdalena! how happy thou art! O, dear Magdalena, thou wilt rise again, and wilt shine like a star, yea, like the sun." But the coffin having been made too small, he said, "This bed is too small for her, now that she is dead. I am indeed joyful in the spirit, but after the flesh I am very sad; the flesh is slow to come to the trial; this separation troubles us exceedingly; it is a marvellous thing to know that

she is certainly happy, and yet for me to be so sad!" When the people came to attend the funeral, and, according to custom, addressed the Doctor, and said that they sincerely condoled with him in this affliction, he said, "You should rejoice: I have sent a saint to heaven, yea, a living saint. O! if only such a death were ours! such a death I would be willing to die this moment!" When one said, "That is indeed true; yet we all wish to retain our relatives," Luther replied, "Flesh is flesh and blood is blood. I rejoice that she has passed over; I experience no sadness but that of the flesh." Again, he said to others present, "Be not grieved, I have sent a saint to heaven, yea, I have sent two." When she was buried, he said, "It is the resurrection of the flesh," and when they returned from the funeral, he said, "Now is my daughter provided for, both as to body and soul. We Christians have no cause to complain; we know that it must be thus. We are perfectly assured of eternal life; for God, who, through his Son and for the sake of his Son, has promised it unto us, cannot lie."

Throughout the whole of this trying event Luther showed all the tenderness of an affec-

tionate father, and all the resignation of a Christian.

His second son, Martin, was tenderly cherished by the father. He himself feared that the child would be spoiled by too much affectionate attention and favoritism. In reference to this, he said, "The love of parents is always stronger for the younger than the elder children, and the more they require the care and protection of the parents the more dear are they to them. Thus, my Martin is now my dearest treasure, because he demands more of my attention and solicitude. John and Magdalena can walk and talk and can ask for what they want, and do not require so much watchful nursing." But afterwards, Luther's anxieties about him were very great. "He is rather a wild bird," said he, "and he occasions me much solicitude." But Martin, who was not without talents, studied theology, and it was only continued ill-health that prevented him from publicly assuming the office of a preacher. He spent his life in private teaching. In an obituary notice of him, it is said that "he possessed such strong mental faculties and such

striking oratorical powers, as even to have excited the admiration of his father."

Of the third son, Paul, when yet a child, Luther thus spoke: "He is destined to fight against the Turks," alluding to the energy of character then observed in him, and which was afterwards so strikingly developed. And truly, this Paul, endowed as he was with unusual decision and unshaken perseverance, was the most gifted of Luther's sons, even if he did not in all respects possess the heroic spirit of his father. He was not only a zealous promoter of the science of Alchemy, so highly prized at that day, but he was a distinguished chemist, and succeeded, by his assiduous labors, in making many useful discoveries in Chemistry and Medicine. He also possessed a thorough knowledge of ancient languages. He was devoted with all his heart to the religious doctrines which his father restored, and defended them with zeal and ability. He was so strenuously attached to the orthodox system of theology, that he once refused a very flattering call to the University of Jena on account of the presumed heresies which the theologian, Victorine Striegel, had promulgated at that seat

of learning, and he soon afterwards received the appointment of private physician to John Frederick II., at Gotha. In 1568 he served Joachim II., of Brandenburg, in the same capacity, by whom he was elevated to the rank of Councillor, and richly rewarded. Afterwards (1571), he was employed by the Elector, August, and his successor, Christian I., at Dresden. The former not only honored him by inviting him to be sponsor to his children, but also presented him with a farm, which, however, never came into the possession of his family, inasmuch as the subsequent times, during which the Calvinistic Chancellor, Crell, held the helm of affairs, were not favorable to the prosperity of the sternly Lutheran Paul Luther. This same Calvinistic spirit, finally, was the occasion of his retiring into private life in 1590. He moved to Leipzig, where he died in 1593. At the baptism of this son, Luther said, "I have named him Paul; for St. Paul has taught us many great and glorious doctrines, and hence I have named my son after him. God grant that he may have the gifts and grace of the great Apostle! If it please God, I will send all my sons away from home! If any one

of them has a taste for the military profession, I will send him to Field-Marshal Löser ; if any one wishes to study, him I will send to Jonas and Philip; if any one is inclined towards labor, him I will send to a farmer." But afterwards, when he became better acquainted with their disposition, he changed his mind. "God forbid," said he, "that my sons should ever devote themselves to the study of the law; that would be my last wish. John will be a theologian; Martin is good for nothing, and about him I have great fears ; Paul must fight against the Turks." But history teaches us that his wishes were not gratified. He himself subsequently advised Paul to study medicine, and the example of John induced all the educated sons of Luther's children for several generations to study law.

The sixth child, Margaret, who entered into a happy matrimonial alliance, was dangerously attacked with fever after the measles, from which her brother suffered at the same time. Her father was much alarmed about her condition, but comforted himself with the thought that she would be taken out of this present evil world. She married George V. Kuhlheim, a

civil officer in the Prussian service, who was a pious man and a most ardent admirer of Luther, and especially of his writings, of which his favorite one was "Luther's Exposition of the Book of Genesis." So profound was his reverence for the Reformer, that the fact was thought worthy of being mentioned in the sermon preached at his funeral. His youngest son must have inherited his father's disposition and character, for he always esteemed it the highest possible honor to be "the grandson of the great Luther."

It is not known to what extent Catharine took part in the education of her children; but a woman of her mild and amiable temper and strong decision of character must have contributed much to the proper training of her offspring. These prominent traits exercised a subduing influence even on her husband; and Erasmus, who was at this time bitterly opposed to him, says, "Since Luther's marriage, he begins to be more mild, and does not rave so fearfully with his pen as formerly." Presuming this to be true, it speaks well for the character of Catharine as a woman and a wife.

Luther not only employed special teachers

for his children, but also instructed them himself, notwithstanding his numerous other engagements. He says, "Though I am a Doctor of Divinity, still I have not yet come out of the school for children, and do not yet rightly understand the ten commandments, the creed, and the Lord's Prayer, but study them daily, and recite the catechism with my little Hans and Magdalena." For years he superintended their instruction, diligently watching their progress, and often giving them tasks to perform. But, above all, he was solicitous about their religious and moral training, agreeably to his own sound principle. The father must speak out of the children. The proper instruction of children is their most direct way to heaven, and hell is not more easily earned than by neglecting them! They were taught to pray and to read the Scriptures and other devotional books in the presence of the family. Particularly during their meals did he address them in impressive, paternal admonitions. Morning and evening he assembled his numerous family, house-teachers, guests, and domestics, to worship. When it is elsewhere said that Luther "daily spent three hours in private devotion," it must

be restricted to the period of the Diet of Augsburg, when he was concealed at Coburg.

Luther, during all his life, was a man of prayer. Although he was opposed to mechanical formality in regard to special times and seasons, as he had been taught in the church of Rome, yet he maintained a certain order and regularity in the performance of this Christian duty. Matthesius, one of his biographers, and a cotemporary, says, "Every morning and evening, and often during meals, he engaged in prayer. Besides this, he repeated the smaller catechism and read the Psalter. * * * In all important undertakings, prayer was the beginning, middle, and end."

"I hold," says Luther, "my prayer to be stronger than Satan himself, and if that were not the case it would long since have been quite different with Luther. If I remit prayer a single day, I lose a large portion of the fire of faith." His writings contain many sparkling gems on the subject of prayer.

Fondly as he was attached to his children, yet he never showed a culpable indifference to their errors, and, least of all, when they were unruly or displayed anything like ingratitude

or deception. On one occasion when John, at twelve years of age, was guilty of a gross impropriety, he would not allow him to come into his presence for three days, and paid no regard to the intercessions of the tender mother and of his intimate friends, Jonas and Cruciger, but forgave him only after he had repented of his fault and humbly begged for pardon. He said, "I would rather have a dead son than a rude and naughty living one. Paul has not in vain said, 'A bishop must be one who ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection, so that other people may be edified, witnessing a good example, and not be offended.' We ministers are elevated to such a high position in order to set a good example to others. But our uncivil children give offence to other people. Our boys wish to take advantage of our position and privileges, and sin openly. People do not inform me of the faults of mine, but conceal it from me. The common saying is fulfilled, 'We do not know the mischief done in our own families; we only discover it when it has become the town-talk.' Hence we must chastise them, and not connive at their follies." Once, when he saw a youth of fine personal

appearance and uncommon abilities, but of corrupt morals, he exclaimed, "Ah! how much evil an over indulgence occasions! Children are spoiled by allowing them too much liberty; hence I shall not overlook the faults of my son John, nor shall I be as familiar with him hereafter as with his little sister." But Luther, though he received from his father a severe training, and was roughly treated at school, was too well acquainted with human nature not to know that undue severity in all things created a cowardly, slavish fear in the minds of some children, and obstinacy and dissimulation in others. Hence he pursued the golden medium, and tried to accomplish his purpose by kind and yet earnest admonitions. "I will not chastise Hans too severely, or he will become shy of me and hate me," said he. "We must take care to teach the young, to find pleasure in that which is good; for that which is forced out of them by stripes will not be profitable, and, if this is carried to excess, they will only continue good as long as they feel the lash. But by admonition and judicious chastisement, they learn to fear God more than the rod. We must often *stammer* with children, and in all

good things come down to a level with them, that is, we must be tender, affectionate, and condescending, and, if that is of no avail, then we may employ severity."

When he saw his wife or children suffering, his sympathizing heart often found relief in tears. "I love my Catharine," he would say, "I love her more than I do myself. I would rather die myself than she and the children should die." It was only when the cause of religion was concerned that the dearest object on earth was not too dear; for the honor of religion and truth, he would have sacrificed wife and children. Deeply penetrated with this sentiment, the magnanimous Reformer, when he had already become the father of two children, could most cordially say, in the spirit of Christ's words, "Let them take my life, property, reputation, children, and wife—let them all go—the kingdom of God is still ours." His heroic hymn, "Eine feste Burg ist unser Gott,"* sufficiently shows his feelings on this subject.

* See a translation in Hymn 907 of our Hymn-Book.

CHAPTER VIII.

Character of Catharine.

It must be acknowledged that there is nothing remarkably striking in the history of Catharine de Bora, considered apart from her relation to her illustrious husband. She was distinguised by no extraordinary talents or surprising act of heroism after her marriage; she has left no literary monument to perpetuate her memory, nor any public institution founded by her munificence. She was nothing more than the "virtuous" woman so eloquently described by King Solomon in the last chapter of the Book of Proverbs, but she was that in an eminent degree. A noble dignity and a temperate self-reliance were the fundamental traits of her character. Hence, though dependent on others for support, she possessed sufficient independence of mind to reject several brilliant offers of marriage, and showed herself worthy of Luther. Her resolution to exchange the noiseless cloister for a life of honorable and

useful activity in the disturbed world without, displayed not only a noble courage in the certain anticipation of poverty and persecution, but also a strong confidence in God. It is more than probable that she read many of Luther's writings as soon as they appeared, not actuated by a blind curiosity, but with a sincere desire to ascertain the truth, and to derive from them instruction for heart and head. Afterwards, during her married life, she took every opportunity of correcting and enlarging her religious views. Although, as the result of the spirit of that age and of her previous monastic training, she was not profoundly educated, yet Luther esteemed her as a woman possessing a noble, dignified, independent spirit, in whose feelings and opinions he found an echo of his own. Pious, in the proper sense of the word, she found her highest enjoyment in solitary communion with God, and those hours which she devoted to the attentive reading of the Scriptures were always the most happy. To this profitable exercise she was often exhorted by her husband, and she followed his advice. Said she, "I hear a great deal of the Scriptures, and read them diligently every day." In writing

to Jonas on one occasion, Luther says, "She is a diligent reader of the Bible; she shows deep earnestness in this duty." She faithfully attended the public means of grace also, and with her Christian brothers and sisters worshipped God in the sanctuary. She was devotedly attached to the doctrines of the Reformation, and one of her dying prayers was for their preservation in purity to the end of time. She never neglected her *domestic* duties. To her husband, in all the relations of his active life, she was the most affectionate companion; in his sickness, the most faithful nurse; in his troubles, the most tender comforter: to her children, she was a most gentle mother; in her household affairs she was a model to all in regard to cleanliness, order, and neatness; to her domestics and dependants, a condescending and indulgent mistress. She was liberal without extravagance, economical without meanness, hospitable without ostentation. Her questions and opinions, still preserved in Luther's writings, show a strong desire for mental improvement, an enlightened understanding, a clear and dispassionate penetration. This elevated, intellectual character of Catharine,

connected with her lofty independence and self-confidence, created a distaste for the company of other less cultivated and less dignified ladies, for the glory of her husband also encircled her head, and the house of Luther was the central point of union of the distinguished men of that day. Hence we need not wonder that, by the envious, she was accused of pride. It is true, that now, after the lapse of three hundred years, there may be many more refined and accomplished women than Catharine was, for she was not distinguished for learning or science; but none exceed her in that pious, Christian disposition which was so forcibly expressed in her words and actions. Her lively temperament and affectionate heart admirably qualified her to feel the warmest sympathy in the diversified events of her husband's life, and most kindly to participate with him in his joys and sorrows. But above all, it was not less her pious disposition than her persevering faith which identified her so completely with himself! Whenever the opposition of the enemy disturbed the quiet of the husband, Catharine never faltered for a moment, and proceeded to administer consolation to his dejected heart. During the preva-

lence of a contagious disease, in 1527, her confidence in God was not unshaken, so that Luther could in truth write, "Catharine is yet strong in the faith." Also, as a widow, when she was subject to attacks of sickness and adverse circumstances, her equanimity never entirely failed. She was especially solicitous about her children, and devoted all the energies of body and mind to their welfare. It cannot be denied that Catharine partook of the common lot of mortals; she had her faults and infirmities; but they are all overshadowed by those numerous exalted virtues which are not always found united in one person of her sex. She was a pattern of every domestic and Christian virtue; of righteousness and good works to her generation, and may the daughters and wives of the present day imitate her example, and profit by the practical lessons which her life has taught!

If she could make no pretensions to personal beauty, still she possessed not a little that was attractive. She was of medium size, had an oval face, a bright, sparkling eye, an expansive, serene forehead, a nose rather small, lips a little protruding, and cheek-bones somewhat

prominent. Erasmus speaks of her as a woman of magnificent form and extraordinary beauty; but Seckendorf says this is an extravagant picture of her. The later opponents of Luther agree with Erasmus in representing her as very beautiful, and falsely charge the Reformer as being attracted only by her personal charms. Maimbourg says, "Among the nuns, there was one named Catharine von Bora, whom Luther found to be very beautiful, and whom, on that account, he loved." Varillas and Bossuet report, "That he married a nun of high rank and uncommon beauty." Chardon de la Rochette relates the following fact: "I have found the likeness of Luther and his wife in a lumber-room in Orleans, where they are in great danger of going to ruin. I will bet that there is no man who would not wish to have so beautiful a wife as Catharine von Bora. It is the first time that I have seen her picture, and it justifies the opinion which Bossuet has expressed of her appearance. She has a noble, expressive, and animated face." But Luther himself says of her, "A wife is sufficiently adorned and beautiful when she pleases her husband, whom she ought to please."

Her likeness was frequently painted, and at various periods of her life, by the distinguished artists of that age, such as Cranach, senior, Cranach, junior, and Hans Holbein, junior. Cranach, senior, painted her likeness in oil colors *sixteen times*, and the other artists mentioned, several times each. Many of these original portraits are still to be seen in the various picture galleries of Europe. There are extant more than *forty* different copper-plate and wood-engravings of her likeness. It has also been transferred to porcelain-ware and other articles of domestic use. A number of medals containing her likeness have been struck to commemorate her virtues, and plaster casts of the bust of full life size have also been made. All this shows the high esteem in which she has ever been held by those who can appreciate exalted virtue and genuine Christian character.

As a proof of her artistic skill and her proficiency in ornamental needle-work, even in that distant age, there is, to this day, exhibited in the vestry-room of the cathedral at Merseburg, a blue satin surplice which she embroidered for her husband, and which he wore on the occasion

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of some great solemnity, and in the former University library at Wittenberg, they still show a likeness of Luther, neatly and elegantly worked in silk by Catharine. But these works will perish, whilst the results of her faith, hope, and charity, will endure forever.

THE END.

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